



Richard Rufus of Cornwall
on Creation: The Reception of
Aristotelian Physics in the West

REGA WOOD

Richard Rufus was an English philosopher-theologian, the fifth Franciscan Master of Theology at Oxford.¹ Like Bonaventure, he was Master of Arts at Paris before joining the Franciscans in 1238, five years before Bonaventure's entry and two years after the celebrated theologian Alexander of Hales had joined the order, bringing with him what became the order's first chair of theology. Together, Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, Bonaventure, and Richard Rufus helped make the Franciscan order a major force in the intellectual life of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²

1. Thomas of Eccleston *Tractatus de adventu fratrum minorum in Angliam*, ed. A. G. Little (Manchester: University Press, 1951), p.51.

2. This paper is dedicated to the late James Weisheipl and to the late Frank Kelley, an esteemed collaborator on the Ockham edition at the Franciscan Institute. Fr. Weisheipl supervised Kelley's doctoral work and encouraged him to broaden his interests to include Franciscan as well as Dominican contributions to the history of Western philosophy. Work on this paper began in 1983 in Erfurt, East Germany, and in West Berlin. It was supported in part by an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship and a grant from the American Philosophical Society. A preliminary version of this paper was read at Kalamazoo, Michigan, at the 1989 Medieval Congress. It was included in the sessions dedicated to James Weisheipl.

Rufus's influence was chiefly felt in England during the thirteenth century. His work emphasized Aristotelianism and logic. Rufus's enemy, Roger Bacon,³ testified to his influence. Bacon blamed Rufus's "insane" views for dangerous trends in logic and theology at Oxford:

I knew the [author] of the worst and most foolish of these errors well: he was called Richard of Cornwall. No author was accounted more famous by the foolish multitude, but the wise considered him insane. He had been reprov'd at Paris for the errors he invented [and] promulgated when he solemnly lectured on the *Sentences* there, after he had lectured on the *Sentences* at Oxford from the year of our Lord 1250. From that time . . . to the present . . . for forty years and more, the multitude has remained in the errors of this master. And this boundless madness is gaining most strength in Oxford, just as it began there.⁴

Clearly, Rufus's views were controversial.⁵ Indeed, they were censured at least once.⁶ Equally obvious is their importance for scholastic theology. The author of the earliest surviving Franciscan *Sentences*-commentary written at Oxford,⁷ Richard Rufus anticipates John Duns Scotus's formidable argument for the existence of God.⁸ Scotus seems to have had Rufus's *Sentences*-commentary before him when formulating his own important views on the sacrament of penance.

3. Roger Bacon lectured on Aristotle from 1237 to 1247, when he left his teaching position on the Arts faculty. Ten years later, in 1257, he joined the Franciscan order. Bacon's second *Physics*-commentary seems to have been influenced by the *Physics*-commentary attributed to Richard Rufus later in this paper. See the edition by F. Delorme and R. Steele, *Questiones supra libros octo Physicorum Aristotelis* 8.2–7, *Opera Hactenus Inedita Rogeri Baconi* 13 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 377–390.

4. Roger Bacon *Compendium of the Study of Theology*, ed. and trans. Thomas S. Maloney (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), pp. 86–87. Though the translation is my own, it is indebted to Maloney's translation and is based on his edition.

5. He was occasionally eccentric. In the course of discussing arguments for the existence of God, he once addressed himself to the foot of a fly. Rufus *Quaestio disputata de existentia Dei*: "Dic mihi, pes muscae, numquid tu demonstras Deum esse?" See the edition in G. Gál, "Viae ad Existentiam Dei Probendam in Doctrina R. Rufi OFM," *Franziskanische Studien* 38 (1956): 177–202, at p. 201.

6. G. Gál, "Opiniones Richardi Rufi Cornubiensis a Censore Reprobatae," *Franciscan Studies* 35 (1975): 136–193.

7. D. A. Callus, "Two Early Oxford Masters on the Problem of Plurality of Forms: Adam of Buckfield—Richard Rufus of Cornwall," *Revue néoscolastique de philosophie* 42 (1939): 413.

8. Gál, "Viae ad Existentiam Dei," throughout.

Rufus seems also to have influenced Scotus's teaching on formal distinctions.⁹

Three indisputably authentic works by Richard Rufus of Cornwall have survived: the Paris *Sentences*-commentary (c. 1254), which is based on St. Bonaventure's lectures of 1250–1252;¹⁰ disputed questions (dating from about 1250);¹¹ and a commentary on the *Metaphysics* written before Rufus became a friar in 1238.¹² In addition, the Oxford *Sentences*-commentary (c. 1252) is also almost certainly by Rufus, as Raedts has shown,¹³ although its authenticity has been questioned by Noone. Rufus's *Metereologion* appears to be lost.¹⁴ His *Physics*-commentary may also be lost, although, more likely, it is to be identified with the commentary (c. 1235) preserved in Erfurt, Amplonian MS Q.312. Finally, there is some reason to believe that Rufus wrote the very influential treatise on logic called the *Abstractiones*.¹⁵

My essay will consider the three early works attributed to Richard Rufus: the Oxford *Sentences*-commentary, the *Metaphysics*-commentary, and the Erfurt commentary on the *Physics*. Thus I shall be

9. Gál, "Opiniones Richardi Rufi," pp. 142–148.

10. Peter Raedts argues that these lectures were delivered in Oxford when Rufus "triumphantly" returned to lecture there in 1256. The argument is based on an added reference to Merlin and the deletion of a reference found in Bonaventure's commentary to the practices of the Gallican church. See Peter Raedts, *Richard Rufus of Cornwall and the Tradition of Oxford Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 61–63. The suggestion that these lectures introduced Bonaventure's views to Oxford audiences is plausible but cannot be reconciled with Bacon's statement that Rufus lectured on the *Sentences* twice, first at Oxford and then "solemnly" at Paris. Also, it would be a bit odd if four Continental manuscripts and no English manuscript of an Oxford commentary survived. So, until more compelling evidence persuades us to disregard Bacon's statement, I have adopted the conventional view that these lectures were delivered in Paris.

11. Raedts, *Richard Rufus*, pp. 64–93.

12. See below, note 16 and related text.

13. Raedts, *Richard Rufus*, pp. 20–39.

14. W. Lampen, "De Fr. Richardo Rufo, Cornubiensi, OFM.," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 31 (1928): 403–406.

15. The identity of the author of the *Abstractiones* is discussed in the introduction to the forthcoming edition of this work by Paul Streveler, Mary Sirridge, Katherine Tachau, and Calvin Normore. They consider the attribution to Richard Rufus the most plausible to date.

concerned chiefly with Richard Rufus's work as a Master of Arts at Paris. I shall discuss only one work written after Rufus became a Franciscan and a theologian, the *Sentences*-commentary preserved in Oxford, Balliol College MS 62. In his Oxford *Sentences*-commentary, Rufus refers frequently to the arguments he had made earlier while expounding the *Metaphysics*. His references have confused modern scholars: he refers to his own views as those of a secular master; he criticizes his own earlier opinions. Though misleading, the references are not incorrect, since the *Metaphysics*-commentary was written when Rufus was indeed a secular master. All doubt about Rufus's authorship of the commentary was removed when Leonard Boyle, using ultraviolet light, found an ascription to Rufus, in a contemporary hand, on the first page of the thirteenth-century Vatican manuscript copy of the work.¹⁶ The commentary is preserved in slightly different forms in four manuscripts—Vatican, Vat. lat. MS 4538; Oxford, New College MS 285; Erfurt, Amplonian MS Q.290; and Prague, Metropolitan Chapter MS M.80.

The Erfurt commentary on the *Physics* is preserved only in Amplonian MS Q.312, an English codex written before 1250.¹⁷ The work itself was written before 1235, when it was cited by Robert Grosseteste in his notes on the *Physics*, in the section from book 8 which also appears separately as *De finitate motus et temporis*.¹⁸ Part of the set of early Aristotle commentaries in which a copy of Richard Rufus's *Metaphysics* commentary is found, the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary is an important help in understanding that other commentary. Robert

16. The ascription reads, "Hic incipit metaphysica magistri Richardi Rufi de Cornub" (fol. 1ra). See Timothy B. Noone, "An Edition and Study of the *Scriptum super Metaphysicam*, bk. 12, dist. 2: A Work Attributed to Richard Rufus of Cornwall" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1987), pp. 46 and 150.

17. Letter from Richard Rouse to the author, 8 June 1985: "Your Erfurt books . . . would be on the early side of [the] middle of the century."

18. "1235" is the date indicated by Dales in his edition of the *Physics*-commentary (see below, note 19). Dales has since suggested a date as late as 1240 for Grosseteste's commentary on *Physics* 8 and *De finitate*, but that suggestion has not been adopted. R. W. Southern retains the 1235 date, suggesting that the commentary on book 8 was written between 1232 and 1235; see his *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 134. James McEvoy provides different dates for *De finitate* (c. 1237) and the *Physics*-commentary (1228–1232); see his *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 514. Thus, while there is no general agreement, no one other than Dales has accepted thus far a date after 1235 for book 8 of the *Physics*-commentary.

Grosseteste cites it as the work of a "Master Richard."¹⁹ Since Richard Rufus is known to have written a *Physics*-commentary at this time, it seems likely that he is the author of this work. Rufus's *Metaphysics*-commentary includes at least three references to his *Physics*-commentary.²⁰ There are corresponding passages in the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary, but none of the three references involves a verbatim quotation and so none permits verification of the reference. Hence the attribution of the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary must remain provisional. Nevertheless, I will here adopt the hypothesis that the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary is by Richard Rufus. Adopting this hypothesis will facilitate comparison between this commentary and Rufus's subsequent commentaries on the *Metaphysics* and the *Sentences*, a comparison of great interest for the history of the medieval reception of Aristotle.

THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION AND THE RECEPTION OF ARISTOTELIAN PHYSICS

The reception of Aristotle by thirteenth-century Christian philosophers provided an important stimulus to natural theology

19. The attribution is to "Magister Richardus de S. Victor." But the argument in question is not by Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173). Since Richard of St. Victor was not a university master, he would not be cited as "Magister Richardus." Dales recognized the citation as a reference to a contemporary author, but he accepted the mistaken reading "of St. Victor," commenting in a note that he could not find the argument in Richard of St. Victor's works. See Grosseteste *Commentarius in VIII libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, ed. Richard Dales (Boulder: University of Colorado Press, 1963), pp. xx, 154.

20. Richard Rufus cites his own *Physics*-commentary in the commentary on the *Metaphysics* 1.1 by saying, "Breviter autem intelligendum est, ordine supposito in omni genere causarum, quod sit primum et quod sit ultimum in illis. Et primo in causis formalibus quia definibiles, tactum est super secundum physicorum" (Vatican, Vat. lat. 4538, fol. 6vb; from an unpublished transcription by G. Gál, p. 55). Gál cites two other references to the *Physics*-commentary "Commentarius in *Metaphysicam* Aristotelis cod. Vat. lat. 4538, fons doctrinae Richardi Rufi," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 43 (1952), p. 230. "Quid autem sit primum in causis efficientibus, finalibus et materialibus, dictum in secundo *Physicorum*, super capitulum de causis" (fol. 7ra). "Ad aliud quod causa materialis <forsan pro: multitudinis> potentiarum in materia est agens primum . . . et illud declaratum fuit diligentissime super primum *Physicorum*" (fol. 13va).

and also created difficulties in some areas. One problematic topic was the doctrine of creation. According to Scripture, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." Most medieval philosophers understood this text to mean that the world began at a certain moment of past time. By contrast, Aristotle argues that the world never began, that no absolutely first moment of time can exist, and hence that past time is necessarily infinite.²¹ Christian philosophers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries dealt with this conflict in a variety of ways.

Some thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Christian philosophers maintained that creation in time can be known only by revelation. Latin followers of Averroës, the celebrated but heterodox Islamic commentator on Aristotle, held that according to natural reason past time must be beginningless and hence infinite. Others, such as St. Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham, maintained that although the beginning of the world in time cannot be excluded by rational argument, neither can it be demonstrated by natural reason. Finally, some theologians undertook to refute Aristotle, maintaining that a temporal beginning of the world can be demonstrated by argument, without reference to the authority of revelation. Bonaventure is perhaps the most famous medieval Christian philosopher to argue directly against Aristotle on this point; Richard Rufus is an earlier Franciscan advocate of the same position.

I want to discuss Richard Rufus's arguments against the eternity of the world. The issues surrounding creation are subtle and complex. They concern the nature of time, causality, the continuum, and the concepts of change, beginning, and ceasing. Medieval treatments of these issues, moreover, are often extremely sophisticated. As Richard Rufus developed his views, his discussion became increasingly technical.

My discussion of Richard Rufus on creation will focus on four problems that confront all Christian philosophers: (1) How can an immutable God create the world without any change in God's nature?

21. But note that Aristotle himself may have held different views on this question at different times. In the *Topics*, he suggests that the question whether the world is eternal is so vast that it is difficult to argue (1.11.104b1–16). For a discussion of Aristotle's views and the question whether Aristotle entertained the view that there was creation in time, see Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 276–283.

(2) Can reason demonstrate that the world was created from nothing, *ex nihilo*? (3) Are there philosophically compelling arguments that show that the world had a beginning? Can arguments for the eternity or beginninglessness of the world be refuted? (4) Presuming that creation can be rationally demonstrated, what account should we give of the beginning of time and motion? In dealing with these topics, I shall take up Rufus's attitude toward Aristotle.

THE PHYSICS-COMMENTARY (C. 1235)

MUTABILITY AND CREATION

In the *Physics*-commentary, Rufus's approach to the problem of how an immutable God could create the world is quite traditional. His discussion is influenced by Boethius. Rufus states the problem as follows: A creator cannot be immutable; the creator's disposition must change. As a creator, God must have a disposition toward the world that God did not have before the world came into existence. In his resolution of this problem, Rufus affirms that God's will remains always unchanged. Since God is entirely simple, prior and posterior have no part in God's nature. God's creation of the world is not temporally prior to creatures; it owes its priority to the simplicity of God's nature.²²

TIME AND ETERNITY

In what sense is God prior to creatures? Rufus describes God as an indivisible (*aliquod indivisibile*). Hence the world is like a

22. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Si ponamus mundum esse creatum, tunc videtur quod creator unde creans aliquam habuit dispositionem quam non habuit prius, cum non creavit. Et potest responderi quod non sequitur, 'quia ab aeterno voluit creare in a c, ab aeterno voluit creare in alio'. Et sic licet creavit <!> in a c, nulla facta est mutatio in eius voluntate, sed semper vult quod voluit et non vult quod noluit. Vel possumus dicere aliter quod haec ratio supponit falsum, cum ponat prius ante creationem mundi, prius dico duratione. Et hoc dicit Boethius quod creare non est prius creaturis temporis antiquitate sed simplicitate naturae, quia ipse [creator] cum sit simplicissimus, in eius esse non cadit prius et posterius" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 11vb).

line flowing from an indivisible point.²³ The point remains, and the line flows. Within the point is neither before nor after, and yet the point itself is prior to the line and all of its parts. Before creation, the world exists with God; its (physical) nonexistence is its existence with God. The nonexistence of the world is not temporally prior to its existence. There is neither before nor after in its nonexistence, and no first moment of the world's existence.²⁴

The concept of an eternal instant, called the 'now of eternity', plays a crucial role in Rufus's account of God's priority to the world. Rufus contrasts the now of eternity with temporal instants that measure mutable beings. Unlike temporal nows, the now of eternity is not the end of a past and the beginning of a future. The now of eternity does not limit the past and the future, and hence Aristotle was mistaken when he claimed that every now is a division between two periods of time.²⁵

The now of eternity pertains to what is unchanging, to the first being and to being as such. There is no succession in immutable

23. Galfridus de Aspull espoused similar views in his *Metaphysics*-commentary: "Concluditur enim ibi [VIII Physic.] quod est unum primum movens, indivisibile etc." See G. Gál, "Robert Kilwardby's Questions on the *Metaphysics* and *Physics* of Aristotle," *Franciscan Studies* 14 (1954): 21; and Charles Lohr, "Medieval Latin Aristotle Commentaries," *Traditio* 24 (1968): 150–152. Compare William of Auvergne *De universo* 1.2.1: "ipse creator benedictus est simplex et impartibilis, et tamen est infinitus et immensus amplitudine sua" (ed. Paris, 1674), 1:683.

24. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Et potest responderi ita et dicere quod non-esse mundi fuit prius quam esse mundi uno modo, et tamen in ipso non-esse non cadebat prius et posterius. Et hoc sic possumus intelligere: non-esse creaturae non est nisi sola existentia eius apud Creatorem. Exitus ergo de non-esse in esse est fluxus eius a Creatore. Intelligamus ergo Creatorem ut aliquod indivisibile ut punctum quoad hoc, et esse creaturae tamquam lineam fluentem ex puncto. Et intelligamus punctum sicut manens et totam lineam sicut fluentem, adhuc erit dicere quod in ipso puncto non cadit prius neque posterius, et tamen ipse punctus est prius quam ipsa linea vel aliquod ipsius. Et hoc modo est dicere quod non-esse mundi est prius quam suum esse, et tamen in suo non-esse non cadit neque prius neque posterius . . . /12ra/ [I]ntelligamus ens primum ut indivisibile et esse temporalium ut quidam fluxum ab ipso. Unde apparet quod ipse fluxus [est] ab alio, et tamen in ipso non est dicere primum. Sic est in creatione mundi vel motus, quod illud a quo est ille fluxus est sicut quoddam indivisibile, et in esse ipsorum non est dicere primum" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fols. 11vb, 12ra).

25. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Et possumus respondere sicut communiter responderetur <respondet E>, ut dicamus quod haec est falsa 'omne nunc est medium duorum temporum.' Sed contra illa supponimus ex quarto libro quod tota substantia temporis est unum nunc manens secundum substantiam. Et hoc nunc secundum quod

substances, no before and after. Like the beings it pertains to, the now of eternity is incorruptible and unfailing. Even mutable entities, insofar as they have being, belong to the now of eternity. For being mutable does not alter being itself, does not add a new nature. Being as such—the being that is common to both mutable and immutable beings—pertains to the now of eternity.²⁶

It is the now of eternity that is (nontemporally) prior to creation. The now of eternity does not limit periods of time; it is (nontemporally) prior to time as a whole. The now of eternity measures created eternity, aeviternity. Aeviternal beings—such as angels or celestial bodies—are created by God in eternal and immutable existence. Unlike God, they have duration, but not the mutable duration measured by time. Since the nonbeing of the world pertains to the now of eternity, the nonbeing of the world has no temporal dimension.

CREATION DEMONSTRATED

Given this picture of time and creation, Rufus seeks to prove that the world began. He demonstrates creation by proving that time and the world cannot be beginningless or eternal. Six arguments

adhaeret toti transmutationi est tempus, et secundum quod adhaeret mutato quod est indivisibile in toto motu, sic est nunc temporis” (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra).

26. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 4.10: “Ad intelligendum quomodo nunc manet idem in tempore, mihi videtur quod oportet incipere a nunc aeternitatis, ut ante intelligamus nunc aeternitatis intelligamus substantiam intransmutabilem sicut intelligentiam. . . . Et talis est duratio substantiae intransmutabilis sicut intelligentiae, quia eo quod intransmutabilis est, nihil in tali substantia succedit alteri. . . . Praeterea, nihil ibi prius et posterius. . . . Sic cum hoc intelligamus quod sicut ipsa intelligentia est incorruptibilis et indeficiens et similiter suum esse, quod similiter sua duratio sit indeficiens et incorruptibilis.// Et sic intelligimus nunc aeternitatis; et loquor de aeternitate creata. Sic enim intelligamus unam durationem indeficientem sine priori et posteriori. . . .// Ulterius intelligendum quod esse mutabile non addit novam naturam super esse simpliciter. . . . Sicut ergo ipsum nunc aeternitatis debetur enti intransmutabili, similiter debetur omni enti in quantum esse habet. Sed in hoc est differentia, quod enti intransmutabili debetur indeficienter et ut aeternitas est. Enti tamen universaliter habenti esse debetur abstrahendo ab his differentiis ‘deficientis,’ ‘indeficientis,’ et sic habemus quod omni enti in quantum esse habet debetur ipsum nunc. . . . /8rb/ [Q]uaero de nunc corruptibili, utrum sit corruptibile in se vel in alio. Dicitur forte quod ipsum nunc consideratum in tali ratione in quantum adhaeret mobile hoc corruptibile est, sed illo eodem considerato secundum sui substantiam manet et incorruptibile est” (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 8ra, 8rb).

are advanced against beginningless time. The strongest is based on the nature of the past. Whatever has been traversed or completed cannot be infinite. But “having been traversed” pertains to the nature (*ratio*) of the past. Therefore, what is past cannot be infinite.²⁷

In the later version of this argument presented in his Oxford *Sentences*-commentary, Rufus seeks to strengthen the controversial premise, “to have been traversed pertains to the nature of the past.”²⁸ Rufus claims that “whatever is past was present,” and concludes that “time past is finite.” The text of this argument is garbled as it stands. But Rufus’s intention is clear. He wants to demonstrate what he takes to be an unacceptable consequence of the view that past time is infinite. If past time is infinite, then some past time was never present. However far we go back in time, we can never go far enough that all of the past will have been present, since there is no all of the past. In what sense is time past, if it was never present? Later medieval Scholastics expounding the term ‘past’ might argue that the past ‘was, but is not now, present’. The infinitist cannot employ this exposition. Instead he or she must accept the consequence, ‘some past days are not now and never were present’.

In modern philosophy, the argument that past time must be finite is attributed to Kant, who advanced it as the First Antinomy of Pure Reason. This argument had earlier been advanced in late antiquity by the brilliant, but heterodox, Greek Christian philosopher, Philoponus.²⁹ Philoponus’s argument was known to Arabic and

27. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: “Item, contra rationem infiniti est esse pertransitum, ut patet in capitulo de infinito. Sed de ratione praeteriti est esse pertransitum. Ergo contra rationem infiniti est esse praeteritum” (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra). This argument is cited by Grosseteste as an argument by “Magister Richardus” in *Commentarius in Phys.*, ed. Dales, p.154. The manuscript mistakenly identifies this “master” as Richard of St. Victor. The Victorines were not university masters, and Richard of St. Victor did not make such an argument. Dales has since concluded that probably the reference is to Richard Rufus, though he doubts whether this portion of the work was really written by Grosseteste (letter from Dales to the author, 30 June 1989).

28. Quoted below, in the third section. See note 69 and related text.

29. Did Richard Rufus know Philoponus? Yes. Indeed, Rufus cites him as “Ioannes Grammaticus.” But he knows only the arguments mentioned by Averroës. He quotes Philoponus approvingly and knows that Philoponus held that the world was corruptible since its power is finite. See Rufus *In Metaph. Aristot.* 12.7–8.1, ed. Noone,

Hebrew thinkers.³⁰ Whether and how it was transmitted to the Latin West is not clear.³¹ The argument first appeared among the Latins around 1223, in William of Auvergne's *De Trinitate*.³²

As presented by Richard Rufus, this argument differs somewhat from the one originally presented by Philoponus and repeated by authors like Maimonides. The original argument stresses the claim that successive synthesis cannot produce an infinite series; the infinite set discussed is the souls of the departed: if the world had existed from eternity, the number of the souls of the departed would constitute an actual and countable infinity, which is impossible. A further claim is

p. 234. But Averroës does not cite Philoponus's argument against the eternity of past time. This argument was stated in Philoponus's *Physics*-commentary, and repeated in his *Meteorology*-commentary. A more complete statement of this argument is from Philoponus's *De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum*, dated 529. His *Contra Aristotelem* also includes the argument. See Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, p. 198. None of these works was available to Richard Rufus. Only Philoponus's *De anima* was translated into Latin before the Renaissance. Hence most medievalists agree with Anneliese Maier that Philoponus had no direct influence on Latin Scholasticism; see her *Zwei Grundprobleme der scholastischen Naturphilosophie*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Storia e letteratura, 1968), p. 127. Nonetheless, the similarities between Philoponus's views and some important developments in scholastic natural philosophy continue to raise questions. Fritz Zimmermann points to Philoponus's popularity among Arabic and Hebrew thinkers as evidence that indirect influence was possible; see his "Philoponus' Impetus Theory in the Arabic Tradition," in *Philoponus*, ed. Richard Sorabji (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 121, 128–129. For a discussion of Philoponus's views, see Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, especially pp. 193–231.

30. H. Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source of Medieval Islamic and Jewish Proofs of Creation," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89 (1969): 376–377.

31. No Arabic or Hebrew version of this argument appears to have been available in early thirteenth-century Paris. Maimonides' citations of Philoponus in the *Guide to the Perplexed* (available in Latin about 1225) make no reference to the claim that the past is by definition completed, traversed, or "exhausted" (to use Nazzam's term). Al-Ghazzali clearly knew the argument, but his work was first translated into Latin in 1328. For al-Ghazzali, see also below, the notes (38 and 39) on the following argument.

32. William of Auvergne *De Trinitate* 10, ed. B. Switalski (Toronto: PIMS, 1976), pp. 68–69. I owe this reference to Neil Lewis. William wrote not much before Rufus. *De Trinitate* is the first part of William's *Magisterium Divinale*, composed between 1220 and 1236. Some, if not all, of the *Magisterium* was written after 1228, when William became bishop of Paris. Kramp's claim that parts were written before 1228 is open to question. For example, Kramp reasons that a bishop would not have used examples in which someone suggests that an unworthy candidate had been elevated

based on the assumption that the infinitist is committed to the view that there was a first person. The argument correctly claims that if there were a first past person followed by an infinite series of people, the series would not reach the present generation.

By contrast, the argument presented by Richard Rufus, William of Auvergne, and some Arabic authors is based on the claim that being traversed or completed is intrinsic to the nature of the past. Some modern cosmologists—such as G.J. Whitrow—consider it the strongest argument against the beginninglessness of the world's existence.³³ Related arguments have been presented by William Lane Craig and Pamela Huby.³⁴

The next argument that I shall present was also first advanced by the Greek Philoponus, was recovered for the Latin West by William of Auvergne,³⁵ and was widely known among Islamic and Jewish authors.³⁶ Rufus's version is based on our concept of priority. If the number of days before today is infinite, and the number of days before tomorrow is infinite, then the number of days before today

to the episcopacy. Hence it is possible, though exceedingly unlikely, that William formulated this argument at about the same time as the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary was written, and in similar circumstances. See I. Kramp, "Des Wilhelm von Auvergne 'Magisterium divine,'" *Gregorianum* 2 (1921): 54–78. Other Latin versions of this argument—by Thomas of York, John Peckham, and Richard of Middleton—postdate the Erfurt *Physics*-commentary that I want to attribute to Richard Rufus. Dales has suggested in personal correspondence that Rufus may have been anticipated by an anonymous Latin author in Vat. lat. 185 (letter from Dales to the author, 11 August 1989; see also Dales, *Medieval Discussions of the Eternity of the World* ([Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990], p. 80). The author of this two page gloss on Genesis 1:1, written in or before 1250, was a contemporary of Richard Rufus. Bonaventure's version of the argument against the infinity of the world, like Maimonides', makes no reference to the claim that past time is necessarily completed or traversed; see Bonaventure *In Sent.* 2.1.1.1.2, as in *Opera Omnia* 2 (Quaracchi: CSB, 1885), pp. 19–24.

33. G. J. Whitrow, "On the Impossibility of an Infinite Past," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 29 (1978): 39–45; Norman Kretzmann, "Ockham and the Creation of the Beginningless World," *Franciscan Studies* 45 (1985): 14.

34. The arguments of modern advocates of this position are discussed by Sorabji in *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, pp. 219–224, 445.

35. *Contra Aristotelem de aeternitate mundi*, as cited by Simplicius, *In Phys. Aristot.*, ed. H. Diels, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graecum* 10 (Berlin, 1895), p. 1179; trans. C. Wildberg, *Against Aristotle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), pp. 145–146. William's argument is quoted below.

36. H. Davidson, "John Philoponus as a Source," pp. 376–377.

is not less than the number of days before tomorrow. Consequently, today does not arrive sooner than tomorrow, which is absurd. Rufus assumes here that unequal infinities are impossible. Since the end of the nineteenth century, philosophers and mathematicians, following Georg Cantor, have rejected this assumption, arguing that unequal infinities are possible. But Rufus's argument need not be affected by this change of view. If we postulate beginningless time, the number of days before today and the number of days before tomorrow are mappable infinite series and hence equal, not unequal, infinities. Rufus might still argue that if the world has no beginning, then we must give up the belief that less time transpires before earlier events than before later events.³⁷

The version of this argument found in the works of Philoponus, al-Ghazzali, and William of Auvergne differs slightly.³⁸ These authors assume that more time transpires before later events than before earlier events. As they present the argument, the absurd conclusion to be rejected is that it is possible to add to an infinity, or that one infinity can be multiplied by another, so that one infinity would be greater than another by a determinate proportion. By contrast, the absurdity Rufus asks us to reject is that 'Today does not come sooner than tomorrow'.³⁹

37. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Item, si esset tempus praeteritum infinitum ex parte ante, tunc numerus dierum usque ad diem istum esset ab unitate in infinitum. Iterum, numerus dierum usque cras esset ab unitate in infinitum. Sed talis numerus non est unus numerus maior alio nec minor, et sic non sunt pauciores dies usque ad diem illum quam usque ad diem crastinum, nec minus tempus. Et tunc non citius veniret ista dies quam crastina. Priori enim res, brevius tempus" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra).

38. Averroës *Destructio Destructionum Philosophiae Algazelis*, ed. Beatrice Zedler (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1961), p. 78. William of Auvergne *De universo* 1.2.1: "Eodem modo est considerare de revolutionibus Saturni, quae sunt ad revolutiones solis in proportione unius ad trigenta. Similiter et de revolutionibus Jovis . . . in proportione unius ad duodecim . . . Impossibile autem est infinitum esse, cujus partes certae comparationis, et proportionis ad ipsum inveniuntur, etc." (Paris ed. 1:688).

39. Richard Rufus almost certainly knew William of Auvergne. Whether Rufus had indirect access to Philoponus's version of this argument is uncertain. The current scholarship suggests that he did not. The most likely point of contact is in the works al-Ghazzali. Al-Ghazzali employed this argument in his refutation of Avicenna's views, *The Destruction of the Philosophers*, the second part of his *Deliverance from Error*.

Many of Rufus's other arguments employ Aristotelian premises to argue against Aristotelian conclusions. Rufus argues that Aristotle's belief in a first efficient cause commits him to the view that the world has a beginning.⁴⁰ If the time between nonbeing and now is infinite, then the number of intermediate causes between the first cause and the final effect is infinite, and there is no first mover. Rufus concludes that if Aristotle maintains that there is a first efficient cause, he must suppose that everything else has a beginning.

Rufus also adduces against Aristotle his statement that the infinite has no relation (*ordinatio*) to the finite. If past time is infinite, it has no relation to the finite, nor to this day. But in fact the past is related to today; therefore it is not infinite.⁴¹ This was not simply an *ad hominem* argument. Rufus accepted the principle that infinite and finite cannot be ordered to each other. For this reason Rufus argues that an infinite God does not directly move the heavens. As an efficient cause, God acts mediately, by means of the Intelligences. If the heavens were moved directly by God's infinite power, they would move infinitely fast, and their motion would be instantaneous, not in time.⁴²

The *Destruction* became available when Averroës' attack on it, the *Destruction of the Destruction*, was translated into Latin in 1328. Before 1328, however, most Latins knew only the first part of the *Deliverance*, a summary of Avicenna's views.

40. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Item, bene sumit Aristoteles quod primum fuit causa efficiens omnium, ergo educens de non-esse in esse . . . Dicere ergo quod illud non-esse per infinitum tempus distat ab hoc nunc, est dicere quod positis extremis infinita sunt media [ut dicit] Aristoteles in lib. Posteriorum. Sic ergo videtur quod si ponat Aristoteles primum esse efficientem causam, quod ponat omnia alia incepisse" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra–12rb).

41. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Dicit [Aristot.] quod infinitum non habet ordinationem ad finitatem. Ex quo sequitur quod si tempus praeteritum est infinitum, non habebit ordinationem ad finitatem, ergo nec ad diem istum; sed habet ordinationem; ergo non est infinitum" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra).

42. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.10: "Praeterea, dicendum sicut dicit Commentator, quod oportet ibi esse duplicem motorem sicut intelligentiam creatam et primam causam. Quia enim motus est in tempore infinito, oportet ibi esse infinitam potentiam. Et quia non in instanti et similiter quia est ibi proportio motoris ad mobile, oportet ibi esse motorem finitae potentiae, ut dicamus quod potentia creata intelligens primum et informatam per ipsum moveat, et ipsa sic considerata quodammodo est finitae potentiae, quodammodo infinitae. Et per hoc quod est ibi de potentia infinita, movet in tempore infinito, sed tamen quia illa potentia infinita movens mediante potentia finita, erit iste motus secundum possibilitatem potentiae finitae, et sic in tempore et non in instanti" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 13vb).

Though he frequently argues against Aristotle, Rufus's attitude toward Aristotle and Aristotelian philosophy is very positive in the *Physics*-commentary. Rufus not only believes that reason makes evident that the world began in time, he also believes that many of the necessary arguments can be drawn from Aristotle's own works. In the *Physics*-commentary, Rufus even claims that it would be wrong to conclude that Aristotle held that the world is beginningless or eternal.⁴³ Rufus concedes only that perhaps Aristotle did believe that time is infinite. Aristotle may have been persuaded by Plato's authority to hold that the world was eternal *a parte post*—that is, having once begun, the world never ends. If so, Aristotle can be excused, for Plato's authority was linked to a good argument—namely, that willing destruction does not pertain to God. Pagan philosophers could be excused for believing that the world would not come to an end.⁴⁴

CREATION EX NIHILO

Rufus even defends Aristotle's statement that the world was not created. Aristotle was arguing against Plato, who believed that the world was created from something preexisting, something with duration. According to Rufus, both Aristotle and Plato assumed that the statement 'The world was not created' was equivalent to the statement 'The world was not created from something preexisting'. Plato was mistaken to believe that before the world existed, something with the potential to become the world existed. In fact, the world was created from nothing, *ex nihilo*, as Scripture makes plain. Correctly interpreted, Aristotle was denying only that before the world existed there was a preexisting potential world, that the nonexistence of the world had duration, and that it was measured by some 'quasi-temporal' dimension. Aristotle was not arguing against the Christian view of

43. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Quia imponitur Aristoteli quod ipse intellexit mundum non incepisse, cuius oppositum apparet ex sua recapitulatione, videtur quod possumus concludere ex dictis Aristoteleis quod mundus incepit" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12ra).

44. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 6.1: "His et multis aliis rationibus contingit arguere ex dictis Aristotelis et per rationes physicas mundum incepisse. Sed forte crediderit mundum non habere finem iuxta illam auctoritatem Platonis: bona ratione coniunctum dissolvi velle non est Dei. Crediderunt enim mundum esse factum in optima dispositione, sed nos per fidem et vere credimus oppositum sicut resurrectionem et meliorem mundi dispositionem" (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 12rb).

creation—namely, that the world was created, and before creation nothing with the potential to become the world existed.⁴⁵

Rufus's positive attitude toward Aristotle at this point in his career shows the influence of Alexander of Hales, whom Rufus knew at Paris before he joined the Franciscan order.⁴⁶ Alexander of Hales believed that there was no great danger in Aristotle's teaching. Aristotle and the ancient philosophers did not know about creation, which is above nature. But as far as their work went, ancient philosophers were correct. The world's existence and its motion are commensurate with the whole duration of time.⁴⁷

THE METAPHYSICS-COMMENTARY (BEFORE 1238)

The picture presented in Richard Rufus's *Metaphysics*-commentary is similar in many respects to that of the *Physics*-

45. Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 8.1–2: "Procedit enim ex suppositione huius 'si mobile est factum, hoc erat <er' E> per motum'. Et hoc non est verum nisi intelligamus factum ex aliquo praeiacente quod praeiacens erat in quiete et tempore praeiacente . . . Sed tunc videtur peccare ratio Aristotelis quae dicit prius non-esse sine tempore, et sic non-esse mundi vel motus non praecedit esse. Si enim praecederet, tempus praecederet, et sic motus. Et possumus dicere quod ipse non sic intellexit, sed intendit ostendere quod non-esse non potest esse prius hoc /12ra/ modo ut in ipso non-esse cadit prius et posterius. Et ita posuerunt philosophi cum posuerunt mundum fieri ex aliquo praeiacente et non ex nihilo. Ipsi enim posuerunt non-esse mundi et motus cum quadam duratione . . . Et debemus intelligere quod ipse [Aristoteles] non intendit quin tempus processit ex non-esse in esse. Sed hunc modum intendebat improbare eis ut eius non-esse esset cum dimensione aliqua et duratione. Et sic intellexit Platonem ponere, ut scilicet poneret non-esse mundi esse cum aliquo quod esset in potentia mundus. Sed durationem huius non vocavit plus tempus, quia non fuit motus. Posuit ergo [Plato] tempus processisse ex non-esse in esse, quod non-esse fuit divisibile. Et si esset divisibile, tunc possemus sumere primum instans in esse temporis . . . Hoc ergo modo intelligamus et procedit ratio Aristotelis, nec concludit inconueniens, scilicet quod tempus non processit sic de non esse in esse, sed quod non-esse duraret per aliquam dimensionem ante eius esse" (Erfurd, Amplon. 312, fol. 11vb–12ra).

46. Rufus's many citations of Alexander of Hales's *Glossa*, an early work, are reported in the index of the 1951–1957 Quaracchi edition of Alexander.

47. Alexander of Hales *De materia prima*, in an unpublished translation by Richard C. Dales based on Paris, Bibl. nat. MSS lat. 15272 and 16406, and Bologna, Bibl. univ. MS 2554.

commentary. The first cause is an indivisible of infinite power.⁴⁸ As in the *Physics*-commentary, Rufus states that the heavens do not move in virtue of an intrinsic principle; they must be moved by an extrinsic principle—that is, the first principle, God. But God does not move the heavens directly, only mediately. The reasons adduced for this conclusion are substantially the same as those offered in the *Physics*-commentary—namely, that the heavens would move infinitely fast if moved directly by an infinitely powerful principle of motion.⁴⁹

The accounts in the commentaries on both the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics* indicate that the being and nonbeing of the world are not temporally ordered. There was no time before the world was created.⁵⁰ The now of eternity is an important explanatory concept in both works.⁵¹ Not every now is the beginning of a future and the end of a past.⁵²

But in some respects the picture has changed. Rufus's attitude toward Aristotle is much less positive; there is no defense of Aristotle on creation. Rufus's account of the beginning of time and motion has changed, and his defense of the view that creation does not imply

48. Rufus *In Metaph. Aristot.* 1a.1: "Et est illud indivisibile prima causa" (Vatican, Vat. lat. 4538; unpublished transcription by Gál, p. 14). 12.6: "[I]ntelligamus modo causam primam [esse in] indivisibili nunc aeternitatis." 12.7–8: "In speciali . . . declaratum est quod una substantia separata a materia aeterna [est]. De illa eadem declaratum est in fine octavi Physicorum quod nullam habet magnitudinem neque divisionem" (ed. Noone, pp. 186, 231–232).

49. *In Metaph. Aristot.* 12.8.6.4–5: "prima autem causa est motor remotus et non immediatus. Nam si sic, cum prima causa infinitam potentiam habeat, moveretur caelum in non tempore . . . Prima causa nullo modo est sub tempore . . . oportet quod sit aliquid medium quod sit motor immediatus . . . [D]e necessitate oportet quod sit intellectus movens caelum et non forma eius sic. Illud mobile per suum motum est causa cuiuslibet viventis in natura: vita vegetativa et sensitiva. Sed quidquid facit mobile, hoc facit per suum motorem. Motor enim est causa motus. Ergo motor est causa vitae. Oportet igitur quod sit res vivens" (ed. Noone, pp. 270–274). Rufus (?) *In Physic. Aristot.* 6.10 (Erfurt, Amplon. 312, fol. 13vb), as quoted above.

50. *In Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: "esse et non-esse prout sunt termini creationis non distinguuntur tempore. Unde, etsi non-esse in creatione sit prius esse, cum [tamen] illud 'prius' non sit prius tempore sed natura solum, non sequitur quod tempus sit ante mundi generationem <ita pro: creationem>" (ed. Noone, p. 191).

51. *In Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: "intelligamus modo causam primam [esse] indivisibili nunc aeternitatis." Compare 12.8–9.7.12 (ed. Noone, pp. 186, 317f.).

52. *In Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: "Et ideo supposuit Aristoteles falsum quodlibet instans esse principium futuri et finis praeteriti" (ed. Noone, p. 186).

mutability in God is more elaborate and relies less on the traditional Boethian account.

THE BEGINNING OF TIME

Rufus abandons the quasi-Aristotelian position of the *Physics*-commentary that time has no intrinsic limit, only an extrinsic limit that is God's atemporal mode of being. Rufus no longer describes creation as flowing from the indivisible extrinsic limit, which is the creator. Instead, in the *Metaphysics*-commentary, Rufus allows that time has an intrinsic limit, that there is a first instant of time. God created the world *ex nihilo* at the first instant of time. Rufus dissociates himself from his former views by saying,

Others wish to save Aristotle in another way. A line has an intrinsic beginning [*principium*]—namely, a point. But motion has an extrinsic, not an intrinsic, limit. And this is what Aristotle intended to say when he said that there is no first motion. For in motion there is nothing except having been moved or instants of motion [*motum esse*]. This reply is worthless, for Aristotle intends that time is infinite, and motion is infinite; <time> does not have any intrinsic beginning [*principium*]. For <every> now is the beginning of a future and the end of a past. According to Aristotle, an instant cannot be the beginning of time, so that before that instant there would be no other time. Hence he supposes that time has no end and no beginning, and neither does motion.⁵³

Quite correctly, Rufus now sees that according to Aristotle's account, time has no beginning. All of time can have no limit, either intrinsic or extrinsic. On the Aristotelian account, an instant at the beginning of all time, or an intrinsic limit for time, before which there would be no time, is impossible.

53. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.1.2: "Alii volunt alio modo salvare ipsum sic. Linea habet principium intrinsecum sui, scilicet punctum. Motus autem habet principium extra se sed non intra, et hoc intendit Aristoteles cum dicit quod non est motus primus. In motu enim nihil est nisi motum esse. Et illud nihil est, Aristoteles enim vult quod tempus sit infinitum et motus infinitus, et non habet principium intrinsecum aliquod. Quia nunc est principium futuri et finis praeteriti, et secundum ipsum instans non potest esse principium temporis, ita quod ante ipsum instans non sit aliud tempus. Unde ponit tempus non habere finem nec principium nec similiter motum" (ed. Noone, p. 181).

Rufus is no longer content to explain that Aristotle is fundamentally opposed only to the view that creation is a departure from an immediately previous state, not to theories of creation *ex nihilo*. Rufus has read a number of Robert Grosseteste's works, including *De libero arbitrio*, *Hexaëmeron*, *De cessatione legalium*, *De motu supercaelestium*, and *De scientia Dei*.⁵⁴ Grosseteste has convinced him that Aristotle really is opposed to the Christian account of creation; Aristotle cannot be excused. Rufus had always known that Aristotle claimed that every now is intermediate between a past and a future, but before reading Grosseteste he did not see this as a false imagination, the product of a clouded intellect. Grosseteste's views were in marked contrast to the optimistic tradition of Alexander of Hales, who indicated that pagan philosophers reasoned correctly in a limited sphere. Grosseteste taught, rather, that the errors of the philosophers were a necessary result of the bondage of their affections; so attached to transitory things, pagan philosophers could not attain an understanding of the simplicity of eternity.⁵⁵

REFUTING THE ARGUMENT
AGAINST EX NIHILLO CREATION

In the *Metaphysics*-commentary Rufus offers no arguments which show that the claim that the world is beginningless leads to absurd conclusions. Instead he seeks to defend the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* against Aristotelian attacks. Aristotle claims that there can be no change where there is no previous state. And Rufus fears that Aristotle may be right. "But now it seems that Aristotle spoke the truth. For since motion is not coeternal with God, . . . the mover was not always in act. Therefore it was previously something moving *in potentia* and thereafter in act. Therefore it was changed from this disposition to that disposition."⁵⁶ Rufus also states the

54. Noone, "An Edition," p. 58.

55. Grosseteste *De finitate*, ed. Dales, pp. 261–264. Compare Grosseteste *Com. in VIII lib. Phys. Aristot.*, pp. 153–154.

56. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.2: "Sed modo videtur quod Aristoteles dicat verum. Ex quo enim motus non est coaeternus Deo, ut ponimus, ergo non semper fuit motor in actu. Prius igitur erat in potentia transmovens et postea in actu. Ergo mutabatur ab hac dispositione in illam dispositionem" (ed. Noone, p. 181).

problem in symbolic terms.⁵⁷ Suppose we grant that *b* is the first mutation or indivisible change. Before that mutation there was something mutable whose disposition changed prior to *b*. Let *a* represent the change in the disposition of the mutable; *b* without *a* (or mutation without a prior change of disposition) is inconceivable. In reply to this objection, Rufus denies that *a* and *b* are distinct; rather, *a* and *b* are one and the same mutation. The beginning and end of mutations do not differ; in mutation ‘It is being changed’ implies ‘It has been changed’. Because *a* is the beginning of *b*, and *b* is the end of *a*, and neither *a* nor *b* have parts, *a* and *b* are one and the same mutation. Because *a* is the same as *b*, *a* does not precede *b*.⁵⁸

Rufus denies that before every mutation (*transmutatio*) there occurs change or motion (*motio*). Motion is change over time, a successive process. Mutation refers to instantaneous change, a change where there is no process, no distinction between the beginning of change and the completed change or the changed state. Unlike a first motion, a first mutation is possible because mutation is indivisible. There is no succession in creation, and hence it follows “*a* is [being] created, therefore *a* exists.” In creation “coming to be made” and “having been made” do not differ.⁵⁹ Rufus concludes his argument by suggesting that this is the reply that should have been made to Aristotle’s argument in *Physics* 8.⁶⁰

57. His is an early medieval use of what is called the *argumentum in terminis*; Rufus is employing a manner of argument he found in Aristotle and Averroës. Compare Robertus Grosseteste, *De veritate propositionis* and *De libero arbitrio* 6(7), 8(9), and 9, as in Bauer, *Die philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste*, BGPM 9 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1912), pp. 143, 170, 191–192, 196).

58. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.2: “[F]alsum est, quia haec transmutatio et *b* transmutatio, quae posita est prima, sunt una et eadem transmutatio. Et cum dicit *b* transmutatio est finis istius transmutationis, quia initium *b* transmutationis est finis alterius transmutationis, dicendum est quod initium *b* transmutationis et finis *b* transmutationis sunt unum et idem, quia *b* transmutatio est mutatio quae non est motus. Et in tali mutatione sequitur ‘mutatur, ergo est mutatum’. Si igitur initium transmutationis *b* est finis illius transmutationis, igitur ista transmutatio et *b* transmutatio sunt una et eadem transmutatio. Ergo *b* transmutationem non praecedit alia transmutatio” (ed. Noone, p. 185).

59. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: “Unde sequitur ‘*a* creatur, ergo *a* est’. In creatione igitur non differt ‘fieri’ et ‘factum esse’, sed sequitur ‘fit, ergo factum est’ in creatione” (ed. Noone, p. 184).

60. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: “Penitus eodem modo respondendum est ad argumentum Aristotelis quod facit in octavo Physicorum” (ed. Noone, p. 185).

CREATION AND MUTABILITY

Rufus's response to the argument that creation necessarily implies mutability in the creator has undergone a similar development. As in the *Physics*-commentary, Rufus explains God's immutability in terms of the distinction between temporally prior and prior by nature.⁶¹ But Rufus no longer claims that this is because of the simplicity of God's nature or because God's will remains unchanged. Rufus abandons this claim on the basis of the following argument:

We could ask: When <God> created the world at the first instant of time, why didn't he create it before?⁶² Either he willed to create the world before or he did not. If he did not, and he now wills to create the world, then there is a change [*diversitas*] in his will, and God is mutable. If God willed to create the world *ab aeterno*, and his will is his action, then he created the world *ab aeterno*.⁶³

Here the objector has posed a dilemma. If the world is not coeternal with God, it came into existence at a particular point in time, at which point God's will changed. No one can claim that God's will is unchanged, and God chooses to act at the first instant of time, since God's will is identical with God's action. If, on the other hand, God's will dictated from eternity the creation of the world, why is the world not coeternal with God?

Rufus's reply to this objection allows that creation involves a change but denies that any change occurs in the creator. Rufus begins his reply to the objection by saying that the proposition 'God creates from eternity' is false. God speaks from eternity, but God does not create from eternity. Rufus distinguishes between God's making or creation (*facere*) and God's speaking (*dicere*). 'Making' differs from 'saying' in that it adds something to the object made—

61. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3–4: "Unde cum quaerit 'quare non fuit mundus prius etc.,' cum illud prius non sit prius tempore sed natura, et mundus sit in universa creatura, hoc est quaerere quare non fuit creatura prior natura. Et hoc est quaerere quare non [est] mundus coaeternus Deo . . . Et huic respondendum est quod Creator prior est natura omni creatura" (ed. Noone, pp. 190–192).

62. For a discussion of the "why not sooner" argument see Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, pp. 232–238.

63. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.4: "Tum hoc potest quaeri: Cum creavit mundum in primo instanti temporis, quare non creavit ipsum prius? Aut enim voluit creare ipsum prius aut non. Si non, et modo vult, ergo diversitas voluntatis est in ipso. Ergo est transmutatio in ipso. Si voluit ab aeterno, et sua voluntas est sua actio, ergo ab aeterno creavit ipsum" (ed. Noone, p. 182).

namely, existence.⁶⁴ Rufus distinguishes types of predication about God. Predication about God's essence, absolutely considered, is distinguished from predication about divine essence as related to external objects.⁶⁵ Some predication about divine action is related to external objects in a way that implies nothing about whether the external object has material existence. Thus 'The first cause knows something' implies nothing about whether that thing exists.⁶⁶ On the other hand, 'The first cause makes something' and 'God creates something' imply that the object of the relationship has material existence.⁶⁷

'Making' is a special kind of divine 'speaking', a kind which not only implies existence but which may also describe the time at which the thing is created. God's speaking always remains in the present tense, but what God says about the object may be that it has been or will be created. God is eternally present, but God's speech can

64. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3: "Ad aliud dicendum quod huiusmodi propositiones sunt falsae: 'prima causa movet ab aeterno' et etiam 'creat ab aeterno' et similiter 'facit hoc ab aeterno'. Haec tamen vera 'dicit ab aeterno'. Et non est suum dicere suum facere. Nam si sic, cum quaecunque dicit dicit ab aeterno, ergo quaecunque facit facit ab aeterno, quod falsum est.// Sciendum est igitur quod facere et creare addunt aliquid supra suum dicere. Illa tamen additio cadit supra rem dictam ab eo et non super eum. Verbi gratia, intelligamus modo causam primam [esse in] indivisibili nunc aeternitatis, et similiter intelligamus omne praedicatum dicibile de ipsa dici de ea prout potest dici" (ed. Noone, p. 186).

65. Robert Grosseteste distinguishes what God knows about the divine substance absolutely and what God knows about divine substance in relation to variable substances. Knowing is a relation that varies when its terms vary. God's knowledge of variable substances establishes relations that are eternal but different from God because they are variable. Since relations have no essence apart from the essence of their terms, multiplying relations does result in an increase in entities. Grosseteste argues that he is not committed to postulating many eternal essences; there is only one eternal and indivisible essence which is God (*De libero arbitrio* 8[9] [ed. Dales, pp. 177f., 192, 196]).

66. The distinction between the 'knowing' and such verbs as 'creating' and 'governing' is also found in Grosseteste's *De libero arbitrio* 8(9) (ed. Dales, p. 184f). The relation established by knowing is indifferent to the existence or nonexistence of the thing known. On the other hand, the relation of creation implies the existence of the thing created. I owe these references to Grosseteste to Neil Lewis.

67. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3: "Sciendum est quod, quando de ipsa causa prima praedicatur sua actio relata ad obiectum extra, et hoc per aliquam relationem dicibilem de ipsa. . . illud obiectum est indifferens sive sit actu in materia sive non. Et respectu alterius relationis quae exit a sua essentia et terminatur in obiectum extra, oportet quod illud obiectum non sit indifferens sed quod sit in materia extra in actu" (ed. Noone, pp. 187–188).

indicate what things will exist first, what things will succeed them, and what things will exist last.⁶⁸

How does this discussion answer the objection? First, God does not create from eternity; God speaks from eternity. Second, there is a change, but only in created things. God is eternally present and unchanging. When viewed from the perspective of created things, however, God's speaking and creation are not simultaneous. The world changes, and its changes are measured in a temporal succession dictated by God's eternal speech.

Rufus takes more seriously in the *Metaphysics*-commentary the challenge that Aristotle presents for the Christian account of creation. A less reliable authority than Rufus had previously thought, Aristotle is a more formidable philosophical opponent.

THE SENTENCES-COMMENTARY (C. 1250)

Rufus's *Sentences*-commentary represents a further stage in his development as an interpreter of Aristotle. Rufus confidently presents arguments against the eternity of time and for creation *ex nihilo*. He is no longer anxious to dissociate himself from the views expressed earlier in his *Physics*-commentary. Rufus once more advances the argument from the *Physics*-commentary that time must have a beginning: "All time before now is past. But . . . there is no past time which was not present. Therefore, any time which might be past had [already] been present, and thus the past is finite."⁶⁹

68. In *Metaph. Aristot.* 12.6.1.3: "Et similiter si dicam 'faciet hanc animam,' hoc est dictu 'dicit hanc animam fiendam esse, et hoc per suum dicere.' Similiter si dicam 'fecit hanc animam,' hoc est dictu 'dicit hanc animam factam esse, et hoc per suum dicere.' Et similiter si dicam 'creavit hanc animam,' hoc est dictu 'dicit hanc animam creatam fuisse, et hoc per suum dicere.' In omnibus his patet quod semper dicit praesentialiter de prima causa; futuritio et praeteritio cadunt super obiecta ad quae habent suae actiones relationem" (ed. Noone, pp. 188–189). For a further discussion of Rufus's views see Noone, pp. 129–133). Noone has also taken up these issues in his unpublished paper, "Richard Rufus, Franciscan, on Creation and Divine Immutability," delivered at Kalamazoo, 12 May 1990.

69. Rufus *Sent.* 2.1: "Sequitur contra aeternitatem motus et temporis aliquid dicere. Dico ergo quod totum tempus usque nunc, praeteritum est. Sed quidquid est praeteritum, aliquando fuit praesens; nihil igitur temporis est praeteritum quod non

THE BEGINNING OF TIME AND MOTION

In the *Sentences*-commentary, Rufus suggests that the description of motion found in the *Physics*-commentary may not be incompatible with the later *Metaphysics*-description. He asks: What is the beginning of motion? Does it have an intrinsic limit, as time has a first instant? He is not even sure time has a first instant. Perhaps the limit of time is extrinsic, as he had claimed in the *Physics*-commentary. Rufus asks: When we say something begins to move, don't we mean that now is the last instant that it is at rest?⁷⁰ Alternatively, as Rufus had maintained in the *Metaphysics*-commentary, a mutation is the beginning of motion—namely, the transformation from not moving to moving, whose beginning and end are one and the same mutation.

After claiming somewhat implausibly that these replies may amount to the same thing, Rufus decides in his *Sentences*-commentary for the account of the *Metaphysics*. Motion has a first mutation, an intrinsic limit, as time has a first instant. Before every motion there is a mutation. But it is not true to claim, as Aristotle would, that before every mutation there is motion.⁷¹

CREATION EX NIHILO

Though Rufus adopts the *Metaphysics*-commentary account, according to which motion has an intrinsic limit, the first mutation, he no longer uses this account of mutation to reply to

fuit praesens. Ergo praesens fuit antequam aliquid esset praeteritum, et ita praeteritum finitum est" (Oxford, Balliol College 62, fol. 105rb).

70. Compare Norman Kretzmann, "Incipit/Desinit," in *Motion and Time, Space, and Matter: Interrelations in the History and Philosophy of Science*, ed. Peter K. Machamer and Robert G. Turnbull (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1976); and Kretzmann, "Socrates Is Whiter Than Plato Begins to Be White," *Noûs* 11 (1977): 3–15.

71. Rufus *Sent.* 2.1: "Praeterea, illud supra tactum, quaeri potest quid sit principium initiale motus, et an aliquod habeat sui intrinsecum, sicut tempus habet instans primum.// Nescio an dicam quod ultimum non moveri sit principium motus. Verbi gratia: Incipit moveri, quid est hoc nisi nunc ultimo non movetur?// Aut aliter (sed forte in idem redit): Principium sive <(?)> initium motus est mutari, scilicet de non-moveri ad moveri. Et haec mutatio est subita, quia mutatio medium non habet.// Unde hoc patere potest, ut videtur, quod contra Aristotelem et alios philosophos: Omnem motum praecedat aliqua mutatio quae non est motus. Nam mutatum-esse praecedat motum, non tamen omnem mutationem praecedat vel mutatio vel motus" (Oxford, Balliol 62, fol. 105ra).

Aristotle's argument for a beginningless world. Rufus summarizes Aristotle's argument for the view that motion and the world could not begin *ex nihilo*: 'Everything that was not and afterwards is, was potentially'. In the *Sentences*-commentary Rufus does not present the solution advanced in the *Metaphysics*-commentary—namely, in the case of the creation of the world, 'The world has been created' follows from 'The world is being created'. Instead, in the *Sentences*-commentary he starts by invoking an argument from Alexander of Hales and Robert Grosseteste.⁷² Any potential realized in creation is the active potential of the creator acting as an efficient cause. Implicit here is the claim that there is no material substrate in the case of creation, unlike generation. This distinction between creation and generation is found in the works of Alexander of Hales'.⁷³ It is emphasized by Richard Rufus in all three commentaries.

The more interesting solution Richard Rufus offers to this problem is taken almost verbatim from Robert Grosseteste's *De finitate*.⁷⁴ It involves careful distinctions about the meaning of the term 'after' when used to describe time and eternity. When we say, 'The first mutation was, after it was not', we should be precise about the word 'after'. If 'after' signifies a temporal order, then, given that there was no time before the first motion, the seemingly self-evident division "Either motion is perpetual or else it is after it was not" is in fact false, since motion does exist, and is not perpetual, but is also not temporally ordered 'after' its nonexistence. If, on the other hand, the

72. Alexander of Hales *De duratione mundi*: "Cum autem obicitur 'primus motus aut est factus aut est eternus,' dicimus quod factus est. . . sed non per viam naturae. . . . Nec est in creatis eductio de potentia in actum secundum quod haec eductio est materialis; potentia enim illa tunc esset potentia materiae sicut est in natura creata. Aut si fiat in potentia antequam educantur non sunt in potentia materiae, sed agentis tantum" (Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 15272, fol. 149va, cited in Dales, *Medieval Discussions of the Eternity of the World*, p. 70). Robert Grosseteste *De finitate*, "verum est quod mundus et tempus et motus fuerunt postquam non fuerunt; et priusquam essent, fuerunt in potentia. . . et 'potentia' non dicat potentiam causae materialis sed solum potentiam causae efficientis" (ed. Dales, p. 259). See also Grosseteste *Com. in VIII lib. Phys. Aristot.* 8 (ed. Dales, p. 150).

73. Alexander of Hales *De duratione mundi*, in Dales, *Medieval Discussions*, p. 70. Doubtless this distinction is found in many other authors.

74. Richard C. Dales quotes Grosseteste in the recent book *Medieval Discussions*, p. 73. Dales also notes Rufus's borrowing from Grosseteste (p. 79). The text as a whole is available in Dales's editions: *De finitate*, pp. 258–260; *Com. in VIII lib. Phys. Aristot.* 8, pp. 149–51.

word ‘after’ signifies the relation of time to eternity, then if the word ‘is’ signifies time or an instant, and the word ‘was’ signifies eternity, it is true that time, motion, and the world exist after they did not exist. Time and motion even existed potentially, provided we realize that the only potential that existed was the active potential of the creator and not any potential material cause. But this exposition of the term ‘after’ is forced. It would be appropriate if before time and the world began, there was time without beginning. But eternity is not the same as beginningless time; eternity is not temporally prior to the time the world began. So no potential world existed before creation.

The dictum ‘Everything that was not and afterwards is, was potentially’ is true, but its scope is limited. It applies only in cases where temporal priority makes sense, where both being and nonbeing are in time.⁷⁵

Rufus’s final tactic for defending *ex nihilo* creation involves an elaborate discussion of the word ‘nothing’. As usual, Rufus’s statement of the problem is pointed: “What is that nonbeing which is prior to being, and how is it prior if not in virtue of eternity?” Strictly speaking,

75. Rufus *Sent.* 2.1: “Et ad istud dici potest quod illa propositio falsa est: Omne quod est postquam non fuit, prius fuit in potentia nisi intelligatur de potentia activa creatoris. Potest et aliter dici quod cum dicitur prima mutatio fuit postquam non fuit, distinguendum est quod si haec dictio ‘postquam’ significet ordinem temporum <(!) B>, implicata est in hoc <h B> sermone contradictio, quia implicatur quod tempus praecessit primum motum. Et tunc non est haec divisio sufficiens: Motus aut est perpetuus, aut fuit postquam non fuit, quia sub neutra parte huius divisionis cadit motus, nec tempus, nec mundus.// Si autem haec dictio ‘postquam’ significet ordinem temporis ad aeternitatem, et hoc verbum ‘est’ consignificet tempus vel nunc temporis, et hoc verbum ‘fuit’ consignificet aeternitatem, verum est quod mundus et tempus et motus est postquam non fuit. Et priusquam essent, fuerunt in potentia, si designetur prioritas aeternitatis ad tempus, et potentia non dicat potentiam causae materialis sed causae efficientis.// Illa autem propositio ‘omne quod de potentia priore exit ad actum’ etc., vera est si significetur prioritas temporalis, et sic tenet eius probatio. Si autem significetur prioritas aeternorum ad temporalia, falsa est.// Item, illa ratio quod non esse mundi et eius esse dividuntur prioritate et posterioritate, et prius et posterius non sunt simul tempore, ergo ante mundum fuit tempus—In hoc sicut supra dictum est, puto quod sit error in eo quod non distinguitur inter prioritatem temporis et prioritatem quae significat ordinem aeternitatis ad tempus. Non-esse namque mundi et eorum quae cum mundo ceperunt non mensuravit tempus sine initio sed aeternitas. Non ergo fuit eorum non-esse prius tempore quam esse eorum. Sed fuit prius et in priori mensura quam eorum esse, quia eorum non-esse in aeternitate fuit, et earum esse in tempore” (Oxford, Balliol 62, fol. 105ra).

Rufus offers no reply. He tells us he is not sure that nonbeing is nothing. Perhaps it is an abuse of language to say that either nothing or nonbeing is prior to something or being. Or perhaps, loosely speaking, we might be allowed to say that nothing and nonbeing are prior by origin to something or being. But since being and nonbeing are never measured simultaneously, perhaps one cannot be prior to the other.⁷⁶ It may be that the only correct statement about the creation of the world is that 'it is, and it was not'.⁷⁷ Clearly, Rufus's scruple here has to do with the incommensurability of being and nonbeing. But he may also be concerned to avoid the possibility of anything even remotely resembling empty time, before the existence of the world.

MUTABILITY AND CREATION

In his discussion of mutability and creation, Rufus sets out to refute Aristotle by demonstrating that absurd conclusions

76. Rufus *Sent.* 2.1: "Quid ergo illud non-esse prius est quam istud esse, quomodo ergo prius si non aeternitate prius? Ecce aliquid fit ex nihilo, id est post. Ergo aliquid est post nihil, ergo nihil est prius illo aliquo, quomodo prius? Nescio an dicam quod illud non-esse, nihil est. Unde nec ipsum, nec nihil proprie loquendo prius est quam esse vel aliquid, et abusive solum dicitur illud prius, et hoc posterius.// An dicam quod sic improprie loquendo, nihil et non-esse quodammodo quasi origine prius sit quam aliquid et esse, et e converso aliquid et esse [sit] origine posterius quam nihil et non-esse.// Forte melius ad hoc dicitur sic: Mensuretur aeternitate illud non-esse. Mensuretur, id est contineatur. Subici enim scientiae Dei est contineri [vel] mensurari ab ipso Deo. Mensuretur et istud esse aeternitate <et *add.* B?>. Illud mensurabatur aeternitate quando ipsum fuit et istud mensuratur aeternitate quando ipsum est. Sed quando istud est, illud non est, nec quando illud fuit, istud fuit. Ergo sicut non simul sunt, sed unum alteri succedit, nec simul mensurantur aeternitate. Sed illud prius mensurabatur, et istud posterius mensuratur. Nec illud est aeternitate prius isto, quia non ambo simul sub aeternitate ordinantur. Nec istud est aeternitate posterius illo eadem ratione. Sed illud fuit prius mensuratum aeternitate quam istud. Et etiam illud aliquo modo dicendi origine prius est quam istud, et istud posterius origine.// Et similiter dicendum est de partibus temporis diversis.// Quid ergo proprie dici potest cum creatur nisi quod *a* est et non fuit *a*. Sic nulla erit improprietas in verbis" (Oxford, Balliol 62, fol. 105vb).

77. Allen W. Wood has suggested that Grosseteste and Rufus may not even be entitled to this formulation. Having given up the use of the terms 'before' and 'after' in the strict sense, they must give up the verb 'was' which cannot be expounded without the use of the term 'before.' A similar difficulty arises with respect to the term 'begin.'

follow from his views on the First Cause. As in the *Metaphysics*-commentary, Rufus sees Aristotle as claiming that the world is eternal and that God causes it, not a common position in Rufus's time.⁷⁸

But there is a difference. In the giving accounts of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, Rufus had restricted himself to defending the Christian view that creation need not imply mutability in the creator. In the *Sentences*-commentary, Rufus takes the offensive; he seeks to show that unless Aristotle accepts the view that the world was created *ex nihilo*, he is committed to maintaining the absurd conclusion that God, or the First Cause, is mutable. Rufus seeks to show that Aristotle cannot consistently maintain both that the world is eternal and that God causes it:

If God made the world, either it was made from something or from nothing. If it is made from nothing, then the world was nothing, and afterwards it had being; therefore in no sense is it eternal. Rather it has a beginning; it has being after nonbeing. . . .

If God made the world from something, then either it was made from God himself or from another nature. It cannot have been made from another nature, since there was no other nature. Therefore it must have been made from God. From this it follows that God is mutable and composite, and the world is of the same nature as God. For whenever something is made from anything, something is necessarily common to both. So if God made the world from God, God communicates something of God to the world, from which God fabricates the substance of the world. There is also something which God does not communicate to the world, and hence God is composite.⁷⁹

78. Noone has pointed out that in this period this is a distinctive aspect of Rufus's interpretation of Aristotle ("An Edition," p. 28). But note that William of Auvergne, like Rufus, sees Aristotle as claiming that the world is eternal, and God causes it (*De universo* 1.2.8 [Paris ed. 1:690–692]).

79. Rufus *Sent.* 2.1: "Item, contra illum errorem qui ponit mundum Deo coaeternum, et tamen a Deo factum, opponitur sic: Si Deus fecit illum, aut ergo de aliquo, aut de nihilo. Si de nihilo, ergo mundus nihil fuit, et postea esse habuit, ergo nullo modo aeternus, sed initium habens, et esse post non esse.// Si de aliquo, aut de se Deo, aut de alia natura. Non de alia, quia nulla fuit alia, ergo de se Deo. Ex quo sequitur quod ipse Deus transmutabilis est et compositus, et quod mundus sit eiusdem naturae cum Deo.// Nam quando aliquid fit de aliquo, necesse est aliquid esse commune in utroque. /105va/. . . Si ergo Deus facit mundum de se Deo, aliquam partem sui mundo communicat, ex qua fabricat substantiam mundi et aliquid aliud mundo non communicat, et ita esset Deus compositus" (Oxford, Balliol 62, fol. 105rb–105va).

Here the conclusion—namely, that the substance of the First Cause is mutable and composite—would be as unpalatable to an Aristotelian as to a Christian theologian. Given the thorny problems Aristotle has set for the Christian account of creation, Rufus must have been pleased to have found an argument that seemed to show that unless Aristotle accepted *ex nihilo* creation, he must either give up the view that God causes the world, or else accept the view that God is mutable.

What will Rufus come up with next? I have not examined in detail Rufus's last work, the Paris commentary. But I note that Rufus repeats several of the arguments against the eternity of the world found originally in the *Physics*-commentary.⁸⁰ From the *Sentences*-commentary, Rufus takes the argument that the First Cause must be mutable if the world was not created *ex nihilo*; an immutable God cannot make the world from eternity.⁸¹ Further examination would undoubtedly reveal exciting new arguments. Richard Rufus will not limit himself to repeating some of his own earlier arguments and adding to the discussion from Bonaventure's *Sentences*-commentary. Instead Rufus will take the dialogue with Aristotle a step further.

The exciting thing about Richard Rufus is how many interesting views he presented, apparently for the first time. He did not cultivate originality; he borrowed without hesitation from Alexander of Hales, Robert Grosseteste, and Bonaventure. Nevertheless, Rufus's own philosophical creativity was exceptional; he anticipated many of the classic Western replies to Aristotle on the eternity of the world.

Rufus was one of the first scholastic philosophers to face the conflict between Aristotle and the revealed doctrine of creation. For over a century after he wrote, Christian philosophers continued to explore

80. Rufus *Abbreviatio Bonav.* 2.1.1: "Si infiniti homines praecessissent. . . . Item, totum tempus usque nunc praeteritum est. . . . Item, impossibile est infinita ordinari. . . . Item, impossibile est infinita comprehendi. . . . Item, si mundus est aeternus cum nunquam fuit sine homine. . . ." (Vatican, Vat. lat. 12993, fol. 132va–vb).

81. Rufus *Abbreviatio Bonav.* 2.1.1: "Item contra illos duos modos ponendi mundum Deo coaeternum, et tamen factum opponitur sic: 'Si Deus fecit mundum, aut ergo de aliquo aut de nihilo. Si de nihilo, ergo habet esse post non esse, ergo non est aeternus. Si de aliquo, aut ergo de se Deo, aut de alia natura. Non de alia, quia nulla sint alia. Ergo de Deo, ergo Deus est transmutabilis, mutabilis, corruptibilis, compositus etc. Et mundus eiusdem naturae est cum Deo, quae omnia absurda sunt'" (Vatican, Vat. lat. 12993, fol. 133ra).

these issues from a variety of standpoints and at a high level of sophistication. They engaged the best minds of the high Middle Ages, including Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, and certainly impressive, that Richard Rufus's treatment of these topics, clearly one of the earliest, already exhibits a subtlety and complexity comparable to the best of what was to follow.

St. Bonaventure University