

ANSELM'S UNUM ARGUMENTUM AND THE DIALECTICS OF GREATNESS

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Abstract

This essay analyzes Anselm's argument for the existence of God in the Proslogion, and proposes that the Saint's method of meditation has much light to shed upon how we understand the argument's cogency and purpose. This method is derived through a survey of Anselm's prayers and meditation. It is then applied to the Proslogion as an integral work. Such a reading raises questions about our previous approaches to Anselm's argument, as well as our overall notions of what constitutes rationality and theological discourse.

Key words: Anselm – ontological argument – meditation – religious epistemology – medieval philosophy – theology

INTRODUCTION

It is often stated, but rarely taken into account adequately, that the *Proslogion* was written “from the point of view of one endeavoring to raise his mind to contemplate God and seeking to understand what he believes,” as an *alloquium* or “talking-to,” as opposed to a soliloquy.¹ This was how Anselm expressly characterized his work in contrast to *Monologion*; and it is essential to understand what

¹ Aestimans igitur quod me gaudebam invenisse, si scriptum esset, alicui legenti placiturum: de hoc ipso et de quibusdam aliis sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripsi opusculum...Quod ut aptius fieret, illud quidem *Monologion*, id est soliloquium, istud vero *Proslogion*, id est alloquium nominavi (*Proslogion*, preface). Translation from *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, Trans. M. Charlesworth, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, [1965] 2003), pp. 102-5. Subsequent English citations from the *Proslogion* and *Reply to Gaunilo* will be taken from this volume. Since this is an English-Latin text, the Latin chapter number will be offered first, followed by a page reference to Charlesworth's edition, which includes the corresponding Latin. Chapter references correspond to the critical edition used by Charlesworth for his translation: *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis*

he meant by this in order to account for the purpose and import of the *unum argumentum*.

So much has been written on the *Proslogion's* so-called 'ontological argument' in recent decades that it would be difficult to summarize these works in a single review. One may say, however, that studies have either tended to focus on the textual form and context of the document, or the argument itself, as presented (exclusively at times) in *Proslogion* chapters 2-3.² In part, this is a byproduct of the splintering and increasing specialization of contemporary academic departments; though it also may be understood as a consequence of a very different way of reading texts since the modern period. In today's world, texts are understood primarily in an analytic sense: as conveyers of information that may be had and traded like currency. To this end, when dealing with documents from an age such as Anselm's, tendency has been to subsume the text into another framework of meaning altogether, be it logical analysis, source or redaction criticism, intended audience etc. Such vistas for reading the *Proslogion* are surely not without merit, and are essential in retrieving any writer's thought to the extent that one may.

Yet the *Proslogion* presents a unique sort of problem; in this text, the author not only speaks to a Being who by definition transcends all intermundane indices, but also claims that this Being conducts the meditation's entire course:

Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek, for I can neither seek You if You do not teach me how, nor find You unless You reveal Yourself. Let me seek You in desiring you; let me desire You in seeking You; let me find You in loving You; let me love You in finding You.³

Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia, 6 vols. Dom F. S. Schmitt, ed. (Edinburgh, Scotland: Nelson and Sons), 1946-61.

² To this writer's knowledge, there is no one-stop bibliography of secondary literature on Anselm. Though somewhat dated, the reader may wish to consult the review essays in Fredrick Van Fleteren, and Joseph Schnaubelt, eds. *Twenty-Five Years (1969-1994) of Anselm Studies: Review and Critique of Recent Scholarly Views*, (Lewiston, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996), esp., pp. 1-52. See also bibliographies in Ian Logan, *Reading Anselm's Proslogion: The History of Anselm's Argument and Its Significance Today*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 203-13; Emery de Gaál Gyulai's *The Art of Equanimity: A Study in the Hermeneutics of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*. (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2002), pp. 379-428; Klaus Kienzler, and Eduardo Brinacesco, *International Bibliography, Anselm of Canterbury*, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999; see also Jasper Hopkins's online source: <<http://www.cla.umn.edu/sites/jhopkins/Anselmbibliography.pdf>>.

³ Doce me quaerere te, et ostende te quaerenti; quia nec quaerere te possum nisi tu doceas, nec invenire nisi te ostendas. Quaeram te desiderando, desiderem

How does one deal with Anselm's argument from a critical point of view, while doing justice to its author's perspective? By and large, recent approaches to the document have been unable to account for prayer, which is fundamental to understanding the text; and, it would be equally reductive to relegate the *Proslogion* to approaches straying from the manifest fact that it is also a kind of argument.

A middle road may be followed between these extremes, however, that seeks to understand the work on its own terms without renouncing contemporary styles of textual engagement. Paying heed to the Anselmian method of meditation and prayer, and then applying this method to the argument as such has the potential to accomplish this.⁴ This essay argues that applying this method to the *Proslogion* demonstrates that its intended logic operates within a dynamic inference of God's glory, actualized by meditation and the affections. What emerges is a text less 'purely philosophical' than has often been assumed, and (we believe) more alive and intriguing to a contemporary pluralistic readership.

quaerendo. Inveniam amando, amem inveniando (*Proslogion*, I; Charlesworth, 115).

⁴ There have been remarkably few studies attempting to situate Anselm's argument within its context of prayer in recent years. Edward Synan's essay, "Prayer, Proof, and Anselm's *Proslogion*" in, *Standing Before God: Studies on Prayer in Scriptures and in Tradition with Essays in Honor of John M. Oesterreicher*, A. Finkel, and L. Frizzell, eds. (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1981), pp. 267-88, offered, to this writer's knowledge, the first recent treatment of this subject. Yves Guitton's article, "La prière de S. Anselme dans le *Proslogion*," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 72 (1988), pp. 373-96, provided a more in-depth study of this topic as it relates to the *Proslogion*'s message. Philosopher Marilyn Adams's essay, "Praying the *Proslogion*: Anselm's Theological Method," in, T. Senior, ed. *The Rationality of Belief and the Plurality of Faith*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 13-39, drew heavily from Guitton's work and furthered it. As valuable as these studies are, none attempted to look at prayer and meditation within the context of Anselm's corpus of prayers. This is likewise the case in German scholarship, which is marked by an even more philosophically oriented approach (see Reiner Wimmer's essay "Anselms *Proslogion* als performativ-illokutionärer und als kognitiv-propositionaler text und die zweifache Aufgabe der Theologie," in, F. Ricken, ed. *Klassische Gottesbeweis in der Sicht der gegenwärtigen Logik und Wissenschaftstheorie*, [Stuttgart, Germany: Kohlhammer, 1991], pp. 174-201, and also Klaus Riesenhuber's "Die Selbsttranszendenz des Denkens zum Sein. Intentionalitätsanalyse als Gottesbeweis in *Proslogion* Kap. 2," in, J. Beckmann, et al. eds. *Philosophie im Mittelalter*, [Hamburg, Germany: Meiner Verlag, 1996], pp. 39-59). In some respects, the current essay begins where Adams's and Guitton's works ended, attempting to deal with the *Proslogion* as an argument; yet it differs from them by bringing Anselm's understanding of prayer and meditation to bear upon the text. See below for studies on Anselm's monastic context and prayer.

A two-pronged approach is thus assumed here, which roughly corresponds to the two broad approaches taken in recent scholarship. First, the argument must be considered qua argument. It will be seen that the notion of 'greatness,' a determinant theme in the *Proslogion*, has been the cause of much ambivalence and confusion in the text's reception. In the second section, the Anselmian method of meditative reading—especially as it relates to the importance of the affections—will be shown to have the capacity of reframing our reading of the *unum argumentum*: transforming its logical structure, resolving its weaknesses for some, and for others placing it into a new light. This method is drawn out through a survey of Anselm's letters and prayers, with special attention being given to his series of three orations to the Virgin Mary. In the third section, the method is shown to highlight a largely silent but deeply significant and recurrent pattern in the *Proslogion*, namely 1) the arousal of the affections; 2) the recognition of one's lowliness; and 3) compunction and love. This schema undergoes sophisticated elaboration in the *Proslogion*; and its stages enjoy elastic shifts in meaning that cast light upon the logical import and purpose of the argument itself. Such a reading is shown to not only better cohere with the great themes of Anselm's corpus, but also to do justice to what we may know of Anselm's own understanding of his *unum argumentum*—a fact suggesting that the thinker was preemptively aware of some of the problems perceived in its regard through subsequent history.

1. AN OVERVIEW OF THE *UNUM ARGUMENTUM*

Since Anselm's argument has already been well expounded from a logical point of view, there is little need to reconstruct it anew here. Jasper Hopkins has provided a clear outline of the argument, as it is presented in chapter 2 of the *Proslogion*.⁵ It runs thus:

(1) Whatever is understood is in the understanding.

⁵ Aside from convention, there is historical justification for assuming that Anselm's argument may be condensed to the form appearing in chapter 2. In Oxford: Ms Bodley 271, 30v, chapter 2 of the *Proslogion* is recopied to the beginning of the objection and reply section of the work. Ian Logan has persuasively argued that Anselm had an indirect hand in the composition of this Ms (See, Ian Logan. "Ms Bodley 271: Establishing the Anselmian Canon?" *The Saint Anselm Journal* 2 (2004), pp. 67-80). Regardless of how Logan's thesis stands, Oxford: Ms Bodley 271 is furthermore practically identical to Dom Franciscus Schmitt's critical reconstruction. The burden of proof thus falls upon the skeptic.

- (2) If one understands what is spoken of when he hears of Something than which nothing greater can be thought, then Something than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding.
- But: (3) When one hears of Something than which nothing greater can be thought, he understands what is being spoken of.
- Thus: (4) Something than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding.
(5) Either That than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding only, or That than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding and exists also in reality.
- Assume: (6) That than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding only.
(7) If anything is in the understanding only and does not exist also in reality, then it can be thought to be greater than it is.
- So: (8) That than which nothing greater can be thought can be thought to exist also in reality.
(9) Whatever does not exist in reality but can be thought to exist in reality can be thought to be greater than it is.
- So: (10) That than which nothing greater can be thought can be thought to be greater than it is.
- Thus: (11) That than which nothing greater can be thought is that than which something greater can be thought—a contradiction.
- Hence: (12) Something than which nothing greater can be thought is in the understanding and exists also in reality.⁶

This argument from chapter 2 also finds echoes in later passages. Configured in this way, the argument claims that it is impossible to have a conception of God in the understanding without that conception also implying God's existence in reality; if that were not the case, the result would be a contradiction.

Prima facie, Anselm's argument seems watertight. Yet this neatness contrasts with its ability to persuade or to incite what

⁶ Jasper Hopkins. "Anselm of Canterbury." In *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. J. Gracia, and T. Noone, eds. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), p. 140.

Newman might call “real assent.”⁷ Since Aquinas’s time, a classic critique of the argument has been to claim that one of its axial concepts begs the question.⁸ The claim is that Anselm’s argument is false in assuming that God’s extra-mental existence may be justifiably predicated of the concept in the mind.⁹ More historically conscious scholars today might add that Anselm’s assumption followed from his Augustinian-Neoplatonic inheritance, which viewed existence and greatness as internally joined.

This is surely true from a historical point of view. Anselm understood his argument in the *Proslogion* as a continuation and summation of the argumentation in the *Monologion*,¹⁰ which assumed such a view of the cosmos:

But what exists through something other than itself, is less than that through which all other things exist, and which alone exists through itself. Therefore, that which exists through itself, exists most of all. There exists, therefore, some one thing, which alone of all things most exists and exists supremely. But that which exists most of all, that through which whatever is good is good, whatever is great is great, and indeed through which whatever exists exists—this is necessarily supremely good, supremely great, and is of all things that exist, supreme.¹¹

This cosmological schema was continued in the *Proslogion*:

And certainly this being [God] so truly exists that it cannot be even thought not to exist. For something can be thought to exist that cannot be thought not to exist, and this is greater than that which can be thought not to exist... In fact, everything else there is, except You alone, then, of all things most truly exist and therefore of all things possess existence to the highest degree; for anything else does not exist as truly, and so possesses existence to a lesser degree.¹²

⁷ Real assent, as opposed to notional assent, which does not involve conviction of the entire person (John Henry Newman. *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. N. Lash, introduction. [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, (1870) 1979], passim).

⁸ *Summa Contra Gentiles*. 1:10-11. It bears noting that Aquinas never mentioned Anselm by name.

⁹ I shall leave to the side the question of whether Aquinas may have begged the question himself in his critique.

¹⁰ Cf. *Proslogion*, preface; Charlesworth, pp. 102-3.

¹¹ At quidquid est per aliud, minus est quam illud per quod cuncta sunt alia, et quod solum est per se. Quare illud quod est per se, maxime omnium est. Est igitur unum aliquid, quod solum maxime et summe omnium est. Quod autem maxime omnium est, et per quod est quidquid est bonum vel magnum, et omnino quidquid aliquid est id necesse est esse summe bonum et summe magnum, et summum omnium quae sunt (*Monologion* III; Translation from *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*. B. Davies, and G. R. Evans, eds.; S. Harrison, trans. [Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998], p. 14).

¹² Quo utique sic vere est, ut nec cogitari possit non esse. Nam potest cogitari esse aliquid, quod non possit cogitari non esse; quod maius est quam quod non esse cogitari potest...Solutus igitur verissime omnium, et ideo maxime omnium

The fact that Anselm's argument relied upon an antecedent worldview presents a potentially devastating criticism of the argument in today's pluralistic context, at least if it is read from the standpoint of apologetics vis-à-vis the contemporary atheist, agnostic, or non-Western thinker. If one does not in some sense already believe that it is greater for God (or indeed anything) to exist than not to exist, then the argument is stripped of its main thread. Not sharing some sort of real assent to Anselm's worldview as a preliminary, even an intentionally sympathetic reading of the argument will only yield an appreciation of its valid form and perhaps a kind of delight in its simplicity.¹³

The skeptic might thus say that it is possible to entertain the idea that God is "that than which nothing greater can be thought," and may even agree on a personal level that the real existence of such a being would be "greater" than its mere mental existence. He or she may even go so far as to hold that in the case of one entertaining such an idea, it is impossible to do so without that notion's simultaneously including God's extra-mental existence. But that inner necessity does not thereby demonstrate God's existence outside of the mind.

These problems do not represent a definitive refutation of Anselm's argument; and in any case that is not the goal for purposes here. Nevertheless, from a purely notional-propositional point of view, there seems to be no clear answer to the dilemma that it presents, and correspondingly, no definitive justification of the argument to-date.

One may question, however, whether Anselm actually intended the argument to be read as such a demonstration. Bear in mind that the text was originally entitled *Fides quaerens intellectum*.¹⁴ Drawing out the meaning and implications of this phrase is extremely important in the attempt to read the *Proslogion* on its own terms and assess its meaning and import.

habes esse: quia quidquid aliud est non sic vere, et idcirco minus habet esse (*Proslogion* III; Charlesworth, p. 119). For a complete study on this topic including the *Proslogion*, see Katherin Rogers. *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics of Anselm of Canterbury. Studies in History of Philosophy* 45. Lewiston, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997.

¹³ See Ian Logan's overview of the argument's reception in the modern period in *Reading the Proslogion: The History and Significance of Anselm's Argument Today*, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 151-96. What is striking about Logan's account is the sheer number of detractors and partial detractors to the argument, who nonetheless were drawn to write about it.

¹⁴ *Proslogion*, preface; Charlesworth, pp. 102-3.

2. THE ANSELMIAN METHOD OF MEDITATION

Though important to keep in mind, it is not essential to construct a detailed picture of his theological patrimony and monastic context here for current purposes.¹⁵ Anselm's own works, in fact, provide the best place to begin, since it is the details of his method, which provide the most illuminating lens for assessing his argument.

In a letter to Countess Mathilda in 1104, which Anselm used to preface a collection of prayers and meditations, some basic insight may be gleaned as to his views on meditation. He says:

They are arranged so that by reading them the mind may be stirred up either to love or fear of God, or to a consideration of both; so they should not be read cursorily or quickly, but little by little, with attention and deep meditation. It is not intended that the reader should feel impelled to read the whole, but only as much as will stir up the affections to prayer [ad accendendum affectum orandi]; so much as that, think it to be sufficient for you.¹⁶

What is clear from this passage is that Anselm granted considerable currency to the affective dimension of prayer, and viewed the affections as a sort of precursor, or necessary partner to the soul's prayerful ascent.

This position was indeed part of Anselm's monastic ideal. During his priorate at Bec (1063-1078) Anselm sent another collection of prayers to the monk Gundolf at Caen. His introductory letter is revealing in this regard:

So accept them, for they have been made with you in mind, and do not blame me for their length, which was made at the request of someone else. And would that they might be so long that, before whoever was reading them—or better still meditating upon them, since that is what they are meant for—came to the end, he might be pierced by contrition or by love, through which we reach a concern for heavenly things. You will find that I have divided the prayers into

¹⁵ For treatments of this context, the reader should consult M. David Litwa's article, "The Practice of Perceiving God's Reality: The Role of the Psalms in Anselm's *Proslogion*," *American Benedictine Review* 58:2 (2007), pp. 137-52, and also Richard Southern's *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 93-9. For a more general overview see Alf Härdlin's "Monastische Theologie – eine 'praktische' Theologie vor der Scholastik," *Münchner Theologische Zeitschrift* 39 (1988), pp. 108-20. François Vandenbroucke's article, "La lectio divina du XI^e au XIV^e siècle," *Studia Monastica* 8 (1966), pp. 267-95, also offers helpful information, though its focus is upon the Cistercian tradition.

¹⁶ Quae quoniam ad excitandam legentis mentem ad dei amorem vel timorem seu ad suimet discussionem sunt editae, non sunt legendae cursim vel velociter, sed paulatim cum intenta et morose meditatione. Nec debet intendere lector quamlibet earum totam legere, sed tantum quantum ad excitandum affectum orandi, ad quod factae sunt, sentit sibi sufficere (Schmitt, 3:4; Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, p. 90).

paragraphs to prevent you from becoming bored, so that you can begin to read at any place you like.¹⁷

There is continuity in Anselm's position emphasizing that the words of his prayers are meant more as a starting point than as an end. In both passages, Anselm considers the text's value as relative and subordinate to meditation and attention of the whole person to God.

To a degree, this may be understood as an example of the monastic practice of *lectio divina*.¹⁸ Being a monk in the Benedictine tradition, meditative reading would have taken up a considerable portion of Anselm's life.¹⁹ By Anselm's time in fact, manual labor stipulated in the Rule of Saint Benedict was giving way to more elaborate prayers in the monastic office.²⁰ Practically speaking, this would have provided greater occasion for the kind of torpor so commonly decried in the tradition Anselm inherited. Benedict, for instance, considered idleness "an enemy to the soul."²¹ Its close relative, *acedia*, is described in John Cassian's *Institutes*, which would have been well known in most Benedictine communities at the time. The text captures the spiritual lassitude that Anselm complains of in his prayers:

When this passion [*acedia*] takes possession of the wretched mind, it engenders horror for the place [where the monk resides], disgust for his cell and also contempt for his brothers who live with him or who are far away, causing him to think of them as negligent of spiritual aspirations. And also for any work in the enclosure of his cell, it renders him sluggish and inert, impeding him from remaining in his cell and not permitting him to read.²²

¹⁷ Accipe igitur eas, quae factae sunt tua intentione, et ne reprehendas magnitudinem, facta est aliena petitione. Et utinam ita sint longae ut, antequam ad finem cuiuslibet earum legendo vel potius meditando perveniatur, id ad quod factae sunt, compunctio scilicet contritionis vel dilectionis, in eis per supernum respectum inveniatur. Denique idcirco volui eas ipsas orationes per sententias paragraphis distinguere, ut anticipando longitudinis fastidium, ubi volueris, possis eas legendo incidere (Schmitt, 3:136; Ward, p. 106).

¹⁸ See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study in Monastic Culture*, C. Misrahi, trans. (New York: Fordham University Press, [1961], 1982), pp. 191-228; and François Vandenbroucke, "La lectio divina du XI^e au XIV^e siècle," *Studia Monastica* 8 (1966), pp. 267-95.

¹⁹ For an overview of what Anselm's day-to-day life was like, see Jame's Gollnick, "The Monastic-Devotional Context of Anselm of Canterbury's Theology," *Monastic Studies* 12 (1976), pp. 239-42.

²⁰ Clifford Lawrence. *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. 3rd ed. (London; New York: Longman, 1989), p. 111.

²¹ "Otiositas inimica est animae" *Regula Benedicta*, 48.1 (*La Règle de Saint Benoît. Sources Chrétiennes* 182. J. Neufville, ed., A. de Vogüé, trans. [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1972], v. 2, p. 598), my translation.

²² Qui cum miserabilem obsederit mentem, horrorem loci, cellae fastidium, fratrum quoque, qui cum eo uel eminus commorantur, tamquam negligentium ac

Combat against this kind of spiritual languor was of particular concern to Anselm; and his prayers and meditations are redolent with language decrying this state and begging God for deliverance. Anselm's *Prayer to Saint Peter* offers an arresting example:

Again and again I try
 To shake the lethargy from my mind,
 to prevent my thoughts
 from being scattered among vanities,
 but when I have gathered together all my strength
 I am not able to break out of the shadows
 of the torpor that holds me
 because of the filth of my sins.
 Nor do I have the strength
 to remain long of the same mind.²³

If recognition of one's spiritual torpor is the first Anselmian stage in rousing the soul toward God, the second stage, as seen here, is recognition of guilt. Subsequent examples will show that this in turn leads to compunction, which is the beginning of love for God, and of being illumined to knowledge of God's goodness and mercy.

While it is common to find examples of Anselm's stirring up the mind to God at the beginning of his prayers, the "stages" of Anselmian meditation are not always exhibited in linear fashion, since for Anselm, the point of meditative reading is not to receive knowledge via the text itself, or even to establish a method in the general sense of the term; the text is rather meant as an occasion and catalyst for prayer.²⁴ In this respect, the Anselmian "stages" of meditation—which may be understood broadly as 1) stirring-up the soul, 2) knowledge of guilt, and 3) compunction/love for God—do hold up to scrutiny.²⁵

minus spiritualium asperationem gignit atque contemptum. Ad omne quoque opus, quod intra saepta sui cubilis est, facit desidem et inertem: non eum in cellula residere, non operam sinit inpendere lectioni (Jean Cassian. *Institutiones Cénobitiques. Sources Chrétiennes 109*. J.C. Guy, ed., trans. [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965], pp. 384-86) my translation.

²³ Iterum atque iterum conor mentem meam torpentem concitare et dissolutam per inania restringere, sed omnibus viribus collectis nec torporis sui tenebras quas contraxit de sordibus peccatorum suorum potest erumpere, nec in eadem intentione diutius valet consistere (Schmitt, 3:30, ll. 12-15; Ward, 135, ll. 18-27).

²⁴ The term "catalyst" arose in conversation with Dr. Jay Hammond in October 2009. This study owes much the fruitful talks he and I had during the summer and fall of that year.

²⁵ Benedicta Ward characterized this schema a little differently in her introduction to *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm with the Prologion*, B. Ward, trans. (Chippenham, UK: Penguin Books, 1973), 59, "Each prayer begins with praise

This may be seen most clearly through an examination of Anselm's series of prayers to Saint Mary.²⁶ Anselm wrote a total of three prayers in this series, two of which, interestingly, were considered inadequate and yet were preserved. An indication of Anselm's method of prayer is observable in the final redaction of the series, since Anselm offered headings to the prayers, which correspond neatly to his meditative schema.²⁷

The first prayer is given a heading that indicates its purpose: "when the mind is weighed down by torpor."²⁸ This prayer begins with praise and contains elements of each step in Anselmian meditation; yet it is particularly marked by an effort to rise above spiritual lethargy and insensitivity. Sin is acknowledged as the root of this. Speaking to sin personified, the one praying exclaims, "If you have made me mad with love for you, why have you made my senses unfeeling with your torpor?"²⁹ This insensitivity keeps the soul from even recognizing its need for repentance. "Good Lady, a huge dullness is between you and me, so that I am scarcely aware of the extent of my sickness."³⁰ In the midst of this, God's holiness (here mediated by the Saint) illuminates the sinner's sad state and begins to incite conviction: "Alas, what confusion there is for an impure conscience in the presence (*conspetus*) of shining purity [!]"³¹

and adoration; then follows self abasement and contrition, leading to compunction of heart, and desire for God; there is some form of petition, and the end is renewed thanksgiving and adoration. But within this framework each prayer has its own tone and color." The *Prosligion* is particularly *sui generis* among Anselm's prayers and meditations; and since I am viewing the work primarily under the rubric of affectivity, I have opted to modify this schematization somewhat.

²⁶ A strict disjunction between intercessory prayer to saints and prayer to God would have been foreign to Anselm, especially with respect to the Mother of God. See for example, Prayer to Mary II, "Pie domine, parce servo matris tuae. Pia domina, parce servo filii tui. Boni filii, placa matrem tuam servo tuo. Bona mater, reconcilia servum tuum filio tuo" (Schmitt, 3:16, ll. 48-50; cf. Ward, 112-13, ll. 90-3).

²⁷ One may be fairly confident that these headings represent Anselm's intent. The prayers to Saint Mary were also contained in Oxford: Ms Bodley 271 (see note. 6) along with their headings; and furthermore, there is near universal agreement as to their integral form in the Ms tradition (See, Schmitt 3:13-25).

²⁸ "cum mens gravatur torpore" (Schmitt, 3:13 ll. 3) my translation.

²⁹ Si mentem eius vestri fecistis amore dementem: vel cur sensum eius vestro redidit torpore non sentientem (Schmitt, 3:13, ll. 19-22; Ward, p. 108, ll. 34-5).

³⁰ Sic enim, pia domina, alienate est a se immanitate stuporis, ut vix sensum habeat enormis langoris (Schmitt, 3:13, ll. 12-14; Ward, p. 107, ll. 21-2).

³¹ Heu confuse immundae conscientiae, in conspectus fulgentis munditiae! (Schmitt, 3:13, ll. 23; Ward, p. 108, ll. 38-39).

In the second prayer to Saint Mary, the soul has risen from the blindness of its torpor and sees itself clearly in the light of its sin. The heading to this prayer indicates that it is for “when the mind is anxious with fear.”³² Though it would be wrong to fit this prayer too neatly into categories, there are three themes that dominate this composition. This first theme is in continuity with the previous prayer, namely distance from God:

When I have sinned against the son,
I have alienated the mother,
nor can I offend the mother without hurting the son.
What will you do then, sinner?
Where will you flee?³³

However, this recognition is heightened in a way that contrasts with the first prayer, inciting the reader to an intolerable sense of culpability, resulting in fear of divine judgment:

Lady, it seems to me as if I were already
before the all-powerful justice of the stern judge
facing the intolerable vehemence of his wrath,
while hanging over me is the enormity of my sins,
and the huge torments they deserve.³⁴

Both themes adumbrate the idea of distance from God; yet this distance is crosscut with a third theme, which emerges in the second prayer to Saint Mary, that of divine mercy.

In this respect, the themes of alienation and guilt provide the basis for the beginnings of love:

God, who was made the son of woman out of mercy;
woman, who was made mother of God out of mercy;
have mercy upon this wretch,
you forgiving, you interceding,
or show the unhappy man to whom he may flee for safety
and point out in whose power he may more certainly confide.³⁵

³² cum mens est sollicita timore (Ward, p. 110; Schmitt, 3:15, ll. 3).

³³ Cum enim peccavi in filium, irritavi matrem, nec offendi matrem sine iniuria filii. Quid ergo facies, peccator? (Schmitt, 3:16, ll. 41-42; Ward, p. 112, ll. 73-77).

³⁴ Videns enim me, domina, ante district iudicis omnipotentem iustitiam, et considerans irae eius intolerabilem vehementiam, perpendo peccatorum meorum enormitatem et condignam tormentorum immanitatem (Schmitt, 3:15, ll. 10-12; Ward, p. 110, ll. 13-17).

³⁵ Deus, qui factus es filius feminae propter misericordiam, femina, quae facta es mater di propter misericordiam: aut ostendite ad quos tutius fugiam misericordiores, et monstrate in quibus certius confidam potentiores (Schmitt, 3:17, ll. 62-65; Ward, p. 113, ll. 117-122).

The third theme of mercy is a culmination of themes in the first two prayers, and it is normally illustrated with a regard to God's attributes and deeds. Mercy functions as a bridge to the effusive expressions of love in the third prayer to Saint Mary, which was the prayer finally written to Anselm's satisfaction.

In the third prayer to Saint Mary, which is "to entreat the love of her and of Christ,"³⁶ the most salient themes are love and praise. This love and praise is characterized by awe, which does not subvert previous themes of distance but subsumes and orders them. The manner in which the prayer begins is revealing in this respect:

Mary, great Mary,
Most blessed of all Marys,
greatest among all women,
great Lady, great beyond measure,
I long to love you with all my heart
I want to praise you with my lips,
I desire to venerate you in my understanding
I love to pray to you from my deepest being,
I commit myself wholly
to your protection.³⁷

The praise and poetic assonance of this overture is heightened to a new level in the third prayer, with the intention of rousing the affections and focusing attention at the outset. This is Anselm's clear aim, as it becomes explicit in the next lines:

Heart of my soul, stir yourself up as much as ever you can
(if you can do anything at all),
and let all that is within me praise the good Mary has done,
love the blessing she has received,
wonder at her loftiness, and beseech her kindness;
for I need her defense daily,
and in my need I desire, implore, and beseech it,
and if it is not according to my desire,
at least let it be above, or rather contrary to, what I deserve.³⁸

³⁶ Pro impetrando eius et Christi amore (Schmitt, 3:18, ll. 3).

³⁷ MARIA, tu illa magna MARIA, tu illa maior beatarum MARIARUM, tu illa maximum feminarum; te, dominam magna et valde magna, te vult cor meum amare, te cupit os meum laudare, te desiderat venerari mens mea, te affectat exorare anima mea, quia tuitioni tuae se commendat tota substantia mea (Schmitt, 3:18, ll. 4-8; Ward, p. 115, ll. 1-9).

³⁸ Enitimini, viscera animae meae, enitimini quantum potestis – si quid potestis – omnia interiora mea, eius merita laudetis, ut eius beatitudinem ametis, ut eius celsitudinem admiremini, ut eius benignitatem deprecemini, cuius patrocinio cotidie indigetis, indigendo desideratis, desiderando imploratis, implorando

What is remarkable about this passage, and the third Marian prayer in general, is the fact that themes prominent in earlier prayers are still present here, but with a new character and orientation. The blindness and spiritual lethargy associated with the first stage of meditation is transformed into wonderment; and likewise the incurving of fear and guilt is opened out into humble love and entreaty.

In this way, the three stages of Anselmian meditation bear a kind of circular quality, with moral, epistemic and ontological 'distance from God' acting as a guiding thread. One begins in the darkness and lethargy of sin; one ends in the rest of *dilectionis dei* and the darkness of bedazzlement. At the beginning, this distance is characterized by fear and an attempt to save one's self by fleeing God; at the end, distance is affirmed and intensified by heaven-directed praise. For Anselm, all of this may be opened up for one who enters into a meditative text, allowing it to lead the soul through the stages of: awakening from spiritual sleep—to knowledge of sin/lowliness—to compunction, love and praise.

3. MEDITATIVE ASCENT IN THE *PROSLOGION*

This meditative schema carries profound implications for how one reads the *Proslogion* and understands its structure and purpose. Although the *Proslogion* is unique among Anselm's works, and in several respects takes his meditative method in new and more complex directions, this method is unquestionably at play throughout the text.³⁹

The first chapter may be viewed as a kind of overture to the whole work in fact, containing its meditative itinerary *in nuce*. The first lines highlight the reader's lowliness, focus his or her thoughts, and call upon the whole soul to lift its attention to God:

impetrates, et si non secundum desiderium vestrum, tamen supra vel certe contra meritum vestrum (Schmitt, 3:18, ll. 9-14; Ward, p. 115, ll. 10-18).

³⁹ Although, Benedicta Ward never undertook an analysis of the *Proslogion*, she viewed the text similarly, granting a central place to the "heart" in its interpretation: "Tutte queste prime orazioni riguardano l'ascesa del cuore verso Dio, ma in modo speciale è così nel *Proslogion*. Qui l'unica intuizione filosofica, che continua a rendere il *Proslogion* più famoso di ogni altra prova filosofica medievale, è utilizzata come chiave per una meditazione di desiderio e aspirazione" ("Le 'Orazioni e Meditazioni di Sant'Anselmo.'" In, *Anselmo d'Aosta, figura europea. Atti del Convegno di studi, Aosta 1° e 2 marzo 1988*, I. Biffi, and C. Marabelli, eds. [Milan: Editoriale Jaca, 1989], p. 96).

Come now insignificant man, fly for a moment from your affairs, escape for a little while from your cares and leave your wearisome toils. Abandon yourself for a little while to God and rest for a little in Him. Enter into the inner chamber of your soul, shut out everything save God and what can be of help in your quest for Him and having locked the door seek him out [Matt. vi.6]. Speak now, my whole heart, speak now to God: 'I seek Your continence, O Lord, Your continence I seek' [Ps. xxvi. 8].⁴⁰

The text goes on to intensify the awareness of distance from God, but first in a way characterized by love seeking an elusive other, similar to the Third Marian Prayer. When God is not then found, the soul collapses back upon itself in realization of its sin. Speaking in third person, the text reads:

He desires to come close to You, and Your dwelling place is inaccessible; he longs to find You and does not know where you are; he is eager to seek you out and he does not know your continence...You have created me and re-created me and you have given me all good things I possess, and still I do not know you. In fine, I was made in order to see You, and I have not accomplished what I was made for.⁴¹

This admission flows into a meditation upon the fall of Adam and the lot of his progeny, culminating in a first-person lamentation upon the reader's state. "Alas, unfortunate that I am, one of the miserable children of Eve, separated from God. What have I undertaken? What have I actually done?"⁴² A catena of psalmic exclamations follow, which furthers the meditation's personal quality. The first chapter ends with an upward glance of love and humility, and an epistemic re-focusing of the soul upon its intended end:

I do not try, Lord, to attain your lofty heights, because my understanding is in no way equal to it. But I do desire to understand your truth a little, that truth that my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Is. vii. 9].⁴³

⁴⁰ Eia nunc, homuncio, fuge paululum occupationes tuas, absconde te modicum a tumultuosis cogitationibus tuis. Abice nunc onerosas curas, et postpone laboriosas distentiones tuas. Vaca aliquantulum deo, et requiesce aliquantulum in eo. «Intra in cubiculum» mentis tuae, exclude omnia praeter deum et quae te iuvent ad quaerendum eum, et «clauso ostio» quaere eum. Dic nunc, totum «cor meum», dic nunc deo: «Quaero vultum tuum; vultum tuum, domine, requiro.» (*Proslogion*, 1; Charlesworth, p. 111).

⁴¹ Invenire te cupit, et nescit locum tuum. Quaerere te affectat, et ignorat vultum tuum. Domine, deus meus es, et dominus meus es, et numquam te vidi. Tu me fecisti et refecisti, et omnia mea bona tu mihi contulisti, et nondum novi te. Denique ad te videndum factus sum, et nondum feci propter quod factus sum (ibid).

⁴² Sed heu me miserum, unum de aliis miseris filiis Evae elongatis a deo, quid incepti, quid effecti? (*Proslogion*, 1; Charlesworth, p. 113).

⁴³ Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam

One may descry in this first chapter the steps of Anselmian meditation in a rising-and-falling pattern: awakening of the soul, recognition of sin, and compunction-love. Distance is the constant theme throughout this section, yet its dominant quality shifts from woe to wonder. In transitioning to chapter 2 (the *locus classicus* of Anselm's argument) this schema is significant. For in the first chapter, the affections are raised up to prayer and concern (*respectum*) for divine things⁴⁴ and thus bring the soul to "ascend" to prayer.⁴⁵

This is an essential point, since it is in this way that the *unum argumentum* acquires its orienting thrust. The axial notion of 'greatness' here is no Neoplatonic abstraction at its root, but a partially realized vision into the divine realm. When Anselm claims that God is "that than which nothing greater can be thought," the "that" (*aliquid*) of which he refers is already real to faith and the affections. The argument's logic thus operates within the affective inference of meditative practice. Far from constructing its resolution, so to speak, *ex nihilo*, the *unum argumentum* functions here as an affirmation of the other in love.

It is often overlooked that Anselm is in fact explicit on this point. After a brief exposition on God's nature and necessary existence (Ch. 3),⁴⁶ Anselm makes a key distinction with respect to the way in which the fool may say in his heart, there is no God: "For in one sense a thing is thought when the word signifying it is thought; in another sense when the very object which the thing is is understood. In the first sense, then, God can be thought not to exist, but not at all in the second sense."⁴⁷ Regardless of how Anselm may have believed his argument capable of application beyond the context of meditation and prayer (as in the case of his subsequent reply to Gaunilo), it is clear that the *Proslogion's* original intention was as a steppingstone to contemplation, where knowledge and love are in unison. The "fool" for Anselm, would likely have been no atheist in the modern sense, but a potential upshot for the monk waxing

credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia «nisi credidero, non intelligam» (Ibid.).

⁴⁴ See here Anselm's introductory remarks to his prayers, Cf. above, n. 17-18.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ In this chapter one may easily recognize Anselm's Neoplatonic inheritance (see block quotes above, n. 12-13), yet it is significant that this chapter follows the chapters 1 and 2 and does not precede them.

⁴⁷ Aliter enim cogitator res cum vox eam significans cogitator, aliter cum id ipsum quod res est intelligitur (*Proslogion* 4; Charlesworth pp. 120-1).

complacent in sin and spiritual lethargy.⁴⁸ Anselm ends this third chapter with a prayer, clinching this intention: "I give thanks, Good Lord...if I did not want to *believe* You existed, I should nevertheless be unable not to *understand* it."⁴⁹

Having ascended, as it were, the first rung of the contemplative ladder, Anselm is free to start anew his soul's quest for understanding. The discourse moves to a discussion of divine attributes, and introduces the heuristic principle that God is whatever is better (*melius*) to be than not to be (Ch. 5). Several possible objections to this notion are then advanced, beginning, significantly, with more abstract questions of logical consistency (Ch. 6-7)⁵⁰ and moving incrementally toward the concrete reality of sin in the world (Ch. 8-10).

This represents a furthering of the Anselmian meditative process. Recall that for Anselm, knowledge of God's goodness is achieved amidst knowledge of the lowliness of self. This was clear in the first chapter; lowliness was understood there in terms of sin and compunction. In these chapters subsequent to the first formulation of the *unum argumentum* (Ch. 2), the issue is reframed. The meditation circles back to an attempt to rise up toward knowledge of God by way of reflection, but this reflection soon runs into contradiction and frustration. This in turn hearkens back to the inadequacy of all creaturely attempts to grasp the divine, and mirrors, on a nobler plane, the foolishness of the listless monk.

The path Anselm takes in passing beyond these "scattered thoughts"⁵¹ is, in effect, to "repent" of them, since without divine help they fall back upon themselves as the efforts of an individual sinner. The train of thought thus begins anew to realize its creaturely limitations. "Whence the stream flows is obvious, and yet the

⁴⁸ While André Hayen holds (in my view, unjustifiably) that Anselm's argument was intended as extending to the atheist, his capsulation of the fool's role in the work is apt. "The fool's collaboration would be superfluous and illusory if he did not genuinely participate with his own effort of 'wisdom' and 'rationality' in Anselm's effort. The fool is, and can only be, a speaker who is *not yet* wise, whose reason has *not yet* recovered the normal play of its exercise by and in faith" ("The Role of the Fool in St. Anselm and the Necessarily Apostolic Character of True Christian Reflection," in *The Many-Faced Argument: Recent Studies on the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*. J. Hick, and A. McGill, eds. [New York: Macmillan, 1967], p. 178).

⁴⁹ *Proslogion* 4; Charlesworth, pp. 120-1.

⁵⁰ E.g., How God is able to perceive without a body? What seems to be God's lack of omnipotence with respect to doing injustice etc. (*Proslogion*, 6-7; Charlesworth, pp. 120-5).

⁵¹ Cf. Prayer to Saint Peter (n. 24).

source where it rises is not seen directly.”⁵² Anselm resolves that God is the judge of all truth, creaturely or otherwise:

But if it can in some way be grasped why You can will to save the wicked, it certainly cannot be understood by any reason why from those who are alike in wickedness You save some rather than others through Your supreme goodness, and damn some rather than others through Your supreme justice.⁵³

Anselm then affirms that God is the only one existing *per se ipsum*, whereas all others exist *per aliud* (Ch. 12-13), and thus enjoy no ability or right to fully grasp God. The philosophical reflections thus continue, but in an increasingly self-confounding way.

After these failed attempts reaching heavenward, the middle section of the *Proslogion* (Ch 5-14) culminates in a manner patent to Anselmian meditation (Ch. 14), by lamenting the soul’s inability to sense God, and attributing this insensibility to human lowliness. As in the first chapter, the cure here is to surrender and allow God to lead the soul into truth. The theme of distance is brought to a greater height in this section, with human sinfulness being subsumed into awe, and human certainty being handed over into divine certitude:

Lord my God, You who have formed me and reformed me, tell my desiring soul what you are...It strives so that it may see more, and it sees nothing beyond what it has seen save darkness. Or rather it does not see darkness, which is not in You in any way; but it sees that it cannot see more because of its own darkness. Why is this, Lord, why is this? Is its eye darkened by its weakness, or is it dazzled by Your splendor? In truth it is both darkened by itself and dazzled by You. It is indeed both darkened by its own littleness and overwhelmed by Your immensity... For how great is that light from which shines every truth that gives light to the understanding! How complete is that truth in which is everything that is true and outside of which nothing exists save nothing and falsity! ...What purity, what simplicity, what certitude and splendor is there! Truly it is more than can be understood by any creature.⁵⁴

⁵² Cernitur unde flumen manat, et non perspicitur fons unde nascatur (*Proslogion* 9; Charlesworth, p. 127).

⁵³ Sed si utcumque capi potest, cur malos potes salvare: illud certe nulla ratione comprehendi potest, cur de similibus malis hos magis salves quam illos per summam bonitatem, et illos magis damnes quam istos per summam iustitiam (*Proslogion*, 11; Charlesworth, pp. 131-3).

⁵⁴ Domine deus meus, formator et reformator meus, dic desideranti animae meae, quid aliud es, quam quod vidit, ut pure videat, quod desiderat. Intendit se ut plus videat, et nihil videt ultra hoc quod vidit nisi tenebras; immo non videt tenebras, quae nullae sunt in te, sed videt se non plus posse videre propter tenebras suas. Cur hoc, domine, cur hoc? Tenebratur oculus eius infirmitate sua, aut reverberatur fulgore tuo? ... Quanta namque est lux illa, de qua micat omne verum quod rationali menti lucet! Quam ampla est illa veritas, in qua est omne quod verum est, et extra quam non nisi nihil et falsum est! ... Quid puritatis, quid simplicitatis, quid certitudinis et splendoris ibi est! Certe plus quam a creatura valeat intelligi (*Proslogion*, 14; Charlesworth, pp. 135-7).

This is a key transition in the *Proslogion*, as it decisively affirms the insufficiency of human knowledge and its radical dependence, and hence also all previous attempts to understand God. Its form is that of repentance from sin, yet the movement is not from numbness to guilt and then to contrition—but from awe to confession and then to praise.

This transition leads into the following chapter, the cardinal significance of which is highlighted by its brevity (a mere two sentences). Here *Proslogion* circles back upon its *unum argumentum* and penetrates it in a deeper way, which casts light upon the work's purpose as contemplative ascent and affirmation:

THEREFORE, LORD, not only are You that than which a greater cannot be thought, but You are also something greater than can be thought. For since it is possible to think that there is such a one, then, if You are not this same being something greater than You could be thought—which cannot be.⁵⁵

This furthering of the *unum argumentum*—applying its logic beyond words and concepts—has the character of an irrevocable vow for Anselm, since it is clear that turning back to one's prior efforts results in the same 'foolishness' revealed in the first formulation of the argument (Ch. 2). Instead of mere words being left behind in prayerful ascent (as in Anselm's introductory letters to his prayers), concepts too must give way to the surpassing greatness of God.

God's presence is raised to the forefront of the text from this point onward in fact; and creaturely knowledge is at once undermined at its root and re-grounded in God:

TRULY, LORD, this is the inaccessible light in which You dwell. For truly there is nothing else which can penetrate through it so that it might discover You there. Truly I do not see this light since it is too much for me; and yet whatever I see I see through it, just as an eye that is weak sees what it sees by the light of the sun which it cannot look at in the sun itself.⁵⁶

The meditation goes on to discuss the contours of this re-grounding of divine vision through the next several chapters (Ch. 17-21). The undulating pattern of Anselmian meditation repeats itself here on an even higher plane, metaphysically illustrating

⁵⁵ Ergo domine, non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit, sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit. Quoniam namque valet cogitari esse aliquid huiusmodi: si tu non es hoc ipsum, potest cogitari aliquid maius te; quod fieri nequit (*Proslogion*, 15; Charlesworth, p. 137).

⁵⁶ Vere, domine, haec est lux inaccessibilis, in qua habitas. Vere enim non est aliud quod hanc penetret, ut ibi te pervideat. Vere ideo hanc non video, quia nimia mihi est; et tamen quidquid video, per illam video, sicut infirmus oculus quod videt per lucem solis videt, quam in ipso sole nequit aspicere (*Proslogion* 16; Charlesworth, p. 137).

human lowliness and affirming divine omniscience and ubiquity, with such topics as God's super-sensibility (Ch. 17), unfathomable simplicity (Ch. 18), ubiquity and eternity (Ch. 19-21). Everywhere in this section, there is a recursive progression of meditation: from lamentation of human inadequacy to affirmation of divine greatness. In each instance, the idea of distance is affirmed and awe is heightened; and the sense of greatness—the orienting force of the *unum argumentum*—is likewise augmented in momentum and focus.

This section culminates in the affirmation of chapter 23, “That He Alone is and who He is.” This chapter brings together and focuses previous discussions of divine attributes; it represents, in a certain respect, the apex of human knowledge, and also an affirmation of love:

And You are that being who exists in a strict and absolute sense because You have neither past nor future existence but only present existence; nor can You be thought not to exist at any time. And you are life and light and wisdom and blessedness and eternity and many suchlike good things; and yet You are nothing save the one and supreme good, You who are completely sufficient unto Yourself, needing nothing, but rather He whom all things need in order that they may have being and well-being.⁵⁷

What follows this section is key in illustrating that the *unum argumentum*, taken in context, represents a movement beyond human concepts and frailty into contemplation on divine initiative. Unlike in the *Monologion*, in the *Proslogion* Anselm never argues for God as Trinity. Yet after the culmination of attributes of God's existence in chapter 23, Anselm simply confesses the dogma in direct address to God. Human words and understandings give way here to stark revelation and awe of God's greatness:

You are this good, O God the Father; this is Your Word, that is to say, Your Son. For there cannot be any other than what You are, or any thing greater or lesser than You, in the Word by which you utter Yourself. For Your Word is as true as You are truthful and is therefore the very truth that You are and that is not other than You. And You are so simple that there cannot be born of You any other than what You are. This itself is the Love, one and common to You and to Your Son, that is the Holy Spirit proceeding from both.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Et tu es qui proprie et simpliciter es, quia nec habes fuisse aut futurum esse, sed tantum praesens esse, nec potes cogitari aliquando non esse. Et vita es et lux et sapientia et beatitudo et aeternitas et multa huiusmodi bona, et tamen non es nisi unum et summum bonum, tu tibi omnino sufficiens, nullo indigens, quo omnia indigent ut sint, et ut bene sint (*Proslogion* 22; Charlesworth, pp. 144-5).

⁵⁸ Hoc bonum es tu, deus pater; hoc est verbum tuum, id est filius tuus. Etenim non potest aliud quam quod es, aut aliquid maius vel minus te esse in verbo quo te ipsum dicis; quoniam verbum tuum sic est verum quomodo tu verax, et idcirco est ipsa veritas sicut tu, non alia quam tu; et sic es tu simplex, ut de te non possit nasci aliud quam quod tu es. Hoc ipsum est amor unus et commu-

After this recapitulation, the meditation progresses to its end. Here God is, in effect, given to the soul through revelation; and the Anselmian pattern of meditation repeats itself for the last time. The last section (Ch. 24-6) begins in a way similar to the opening of the *Proslogion*: “Now, my soul, rouse and lift up your whole understanding (*intellectum*) and think as much as you can on what kind and how great this good is.”⁵⁹ Reason in this final section relies explicitly upon faith; and verbs shift into the future, as attention is oriented toward the soul’s promised end.⁶⁰ Instead of guilt, the soul here is characterized alternatively as insignificant (*homuncio*), and as having undergone a long journey. “O human heart, O needy heart, O heart experienced in suffering, indeed overwhelmed by suffering, how greatly would you rejoice if you abounded in all these things!”⁶¹ In reflecting upon the soul’s end in communion with the all saints in heaven, Anselm draws together two key ideas, which illustrate the existential logic of the *unum argumentum*. Speaking of the saints, he says:

They will, no doubt, rejoice as much as they love and they will love as much as they know. How much will they know You, then, Lord, and how much will they love You? ... Let knowledge of You grow in me here, and there [in heaven] be made complete; let Your love grow in me here and there be made complete, so that here my joy may be made great in hope, and there be complete in reality.⁶²

In this final section, there is an explicit coming-together of knowledge and love, with the former leading into the latter. Throughout, the meditative movement seen in Anselm’s prayers and meditations—from numbness and lethargy, to knowledge of the soul’s

nis tibi et filio tuo, id est sanctus spiritus ab utroque procedens (*Proslogion* 23; Charlesworth, pp. 144-5).

⁵⁹ Excita nunc, anima mea, et erige totum intellectum tuum, et cogita quantum potes, quale et quantum sit illud bonum (*Proslogion* 25; Charlesworth, pp. 146-7).

⁶⁰ Paul Gilbert has drawn attention to this in “Entrer dans la Joie: *Proslogion* XXIV-XXVI,” In: *Saint Anselm—A Thinker for Yesterday and Today. Texts and Studies in Religion* 90. C. Viola, and F. Van Fleteren, eds. (Lewiston, UK: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), p. 217.

⁶¹ Cor humanum, cor indigenum, cor expertum aerumnas immo obrutum aerumnis: quantum gauderes, si his omnibus abundares? (*Proslogion*, 25; Charlesworth, pp. 150-1).

⁶² Nondum ergo dixi aut cogitavi, domine, quantum gaudebunt illi beati tui. Utique tantum gaudebunt, quantum amabunt; tantum amabunt, quantum cognoscent. Quantum te cognoscent, domine, tunc, et quantum te amabunt?... Oro, deus, cognoscam te, amem te, ut gaudeam de te. Et si non possum in hac vita ad plenum, vel proficiam in dies usque dum veniat illud ad plenum. Proficiat hic in me notitia tui, et ibi fiat plena; crescat amor tuus, et ibi sit plenus: ut hic gaudium meum sit in spe magnum, et ibi sit in re plenum (*Proslogion*, 26; Charlesworth, pp. 152-3).

lowliness, to a contrite vision, experience and reciprocation of God's love—provides the *Proslogion* with its discreet existential pattern.

Anselm's sweeping fugue begins in the first chapter, and after the initial formulation of the argument and its exposition (Ch. 2-4), God is sought through philosophical reflection and again finds its insufficiency, leading to the second, deeper formulation of the argument (Ch. 15). Here the pattern is repeated (Ch. 16-22), until philosophical reflection gives way to revelation, on primarily God's initiative (Ch. 23-26). Anselm can only respond to this revelation in awe and praise.

When this meditative pattern is viewed formally, it is clear that Anselm's *unum argumentum* was never originally intended as a *demonstratio* or propositional proof. It is through meditative ascent, in fact, that the *Proslogion* acquires its full coherence. Over the course of the text, the *Proslogion's* affective modes shift from lamentation to contrite desire and then back again, in a manner running in tandem with the text's dialectical argument and attendant notion of greatness. There is thus an almost musical movement within the text, whereby vision of God's majesty is inferred via the affections in a fashion harmonizing with its recursive logic. For Anselm, it is within this vision and movement of the heart that truth unveils its multidimensional and compelling face.

CONCLUSION

Subsequent readers of the *Proslogion* have often read the work from the point of view of its being an argument. There is certainly historical justification for this, as Anselm no doubt believed that the vision expounded in his work was the truth about the world; this was also the tack Anselm assumed in defending the argument in his reply to Gaunilo. Yet there was a statement made in this *Reply* that has been sorely neglected, and which indicates that Anselm was cognizant of his argument's potency being rooted in prayer. In particular, Anselm said in his reply to Gaunilo: "My strongest argument that this is false [viz., that God is not the greatest thing that may be thought] is to appeal to your faith and to your conscience."⁶³

⁶³ Quod quam falsum sit, fide et conscientia tua pro firmissimo utor argumento (*Reply to Gaunilo*, 1.; Charlesworth, pp. 168-9). No in-depth study of the notion of conscience has been written on Anselm, which is a pity, since it would undoubtedly shed much light upon what Anselm may have thought about his argument's persuasiveness and application, among other things. The term bears undoubtedly religious overtones, yet it functions in relative independence from revelation. Inos Biffi, in "La coscienza e la libertà nell'epistolario di Saint'Anselmo," in

Anselm then goes on to defend his argument, which by comparison to this assertion, seems rationalistic.

What is significant here is that Anselm recognized reason as being subject to various foundations, the strongest of which was Christian faith and a well-formed conscience. To a degree, the ambivalence characterizing Anselm's response preempts the ambivalence of its long history of reception. This partially explains the *Proslogion's* quality of seeming at once fascinating and unstintingly elusive to readers today. It further raises questions about the nature of theological discourse, as well as the boundaries of what constitutes rationality.

In sum, Anselm understood that there could be no spectator position for the one seeking to understand God, as each, in some fashion, comes to the endeavor already engaged in the quest. For this reason, Anselm knew that his *unum argumentum* best fulfilled its purpose when entered into with the whole soul to a vision of God's greatness. Having considered the *Proslogion* in light its meditative context, a step has been taken in underscoring the importance of this point, and illustrating the fertile genius of Anselm's masterpiece.

ANZELMOV UNUM ARGUMENTUM I DIJALEKTIKA BOŽJE VELIČINE

Sažetak

Esej analizira Anzelmov ontološki argument za Božje postojanje u Proslogionu. Predlaže se teza da je metoda meditacije koju svetac koristi integralni dio argumenta koji nam pomaže u razumijevanju nje-gove unutrašnje logike i svrhe. Metoda dijalektičke meditacije proizašla je iz istraživačkog rada na širokom spektru tekstova Anzelmovih molitava i meditacija. Zaključci istraživanja se zatim primjenjuju na djelo Proslogion. Predložena interpretacija otvara pitanja o prethodnim pristupima Anzelmovom argumentu te o razumijevanju racionalnosti u kontekstu teološkog diskursa.

Ključne riječi: Anzelmo – ontološki argument – meditacija – religijska epistemologija – srednjovjekovna filozofija – teologija

Saint Anselm: A Thinker for Yesterday and Today, (C. Viola, and F. Van Fleteren, eds., Lewiston, UK: Edwin Mellen, 2002), pp. 395-408, developed a notion of conscience in Anselm, which closely relates to Anselm's works on human freedom and truth (p. 396). Bifi's description of conscience as a sort of "autoposizione nel senso della rettitudine," (p. 407) seems to shed some light on the term here.

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