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ST. ANSELM'S PROSLOGION: KNOWING AND EXPERIENCING GOD

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St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), a Benedictine abbot and archbishop, was one of the foremost philosophers of the middle ages. One of his most intriguing contributions was his so-called 'ontological argument' for the existence of God. Basically, Anselm argued that even the fool must admit that God is "that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived". But this concept implies the existence of the thing conceived for God would not be "that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived" if He lacked existence. Put in a rudimentary and non-technical form, the argument is as follows: a) I can think of God as "that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived"; b) but any conception or thought is a form of "being" or existence; c) therefore, God exists. As Josef Pieper pointed out, the argument hinges on the notion of God as pure being, and pure being includes within itself both existence in reality and existence in the mind. Indeed, as existence is the essence of God, the non-existence of God cannot be conceived. The interesting thing about this argument is that, while it is taken to be self-evident, it immediately boggles the mind—especially the modern Western mind. Indeed, Anselm's Proslogion, in which the argument was advanced, was immediately attacked by Gaunilo of Marmoutier, whom Anselm later answered in a Responsio. Robert A. Herrera takes up the Proslogion argument again in the article that follows, but he suggests that commentators have missed much by considering the argument only as dialectical syllogism. Rather, Herrera contends, Anselm meant the argument to be a starting point in an understanding of God which would generate love, and which, finally, would result in that very joy of the experience of God which is a foretaste of eternal life.



PERHAPS ONE OF THE SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIEVAL scholarship is the renewal of interest in Anselm's *Proslogion* argument, the source of later a priori and 'ontological' proofs for the existence of God. Few themes recur with such insistence: when interest appears to flag, new controversy is certain to occur. The argument and its variations have assumed the role of phoenix in always managing to rise from their ashes with renewed vigor. Kant's 'definitive' refutation, for example, was set aside by Hegel, who credits Anselm with bringing the "highest law" to consciousness.¹ Hegel attempted a reformulation of the a priori demonstration in the light of his system, thus effectively voiding the censure of Kant's *Transcendental Dialectics*.

In the past few decades alone, more has been written about the argument than perhaps any other comparable Medieval text. In a rather unfriendly intellectual milieu, it has been given a favorable treatment by Hartshorne,² Malcolm,³ and Morneau,⁴ among others. Studies nearing the encyclopaedic such as *Spicilegium Becense*⁵ and *Analecta Anselmiana*⁶ have, for the most part, centered on the argument. From the viewpoint of philosophy, theology, and religion, the influence of the *Proslogion* argument has been truly enormous, in spite of its paradoxically minor influence on Anselm's own immediate disciples. It is doubtless possible, with Koyre,⁷ to classify Medieval and Modern philoso-

phies as belonging to two major camps: those accepting the argument and those rejecting it. It stands at the very core of those problems with which human thought has struggled and by which it has been plagued since Parmenides: the relation between thinking and being, reality and possibility, man and the Divine. To take a position regarding the argument is to show one's hand on an entire constellation of philosophical and theological problems.

The contemporary approach to the *Proslogion* argument has, in most cases, followed later Medieval exegesis in treating it as primarily an exercise in traditional dialectic, the *logica vetus*. In some cases, nevertheless, new perspectives have been opened. Smith,⁸ Allshouse,⁹ and others, have accentuated the experiential factors encountered in the argument, and view Anselm as a philosopher-theologian of radical empiricism. Zubirit¹⁰ and Dumery¹¹ (within the thematics of religacion and the 'fourth reduction') believe that the argument can be interpreted in phenomenological or existentialist terms. The efforts of the present generation of exegetes may well uncover other perspectives on Anselm's discovery and contribute towards a more comprehensive evaluation of the argument.

In spite of the profound interest it elicits and the wealth of scholarship lavished on it the *Proslogion* argument remains, to a surprising extent, uncharted territory. Many of its proponents as well as its adversaries have remained curiously unaware of its original formulation. This may account, in some way, for the uncritical manner in which most of our histories of philosophy assume the existence of an ectoplasmic 'ontological argument' which is, in turn, foisted on Anselm, Bonaventure, Descartes, Hegel and others. Even serious interpretation, for the most part, continues to center on *Proslogion* II, in spite of Karl Barth's 1913 study¹² which demonstrated that the argument is not an isolated insight of the second chapter but that *Proslogion* III-IV, Gaunilo's defense, and the *Responsio* must be taken into consideration. The multifaceted character of Anselm's thought as evidenced in the *Proslogion* is an additional factor in the enigmatic character of the argument to the contemporary mind. It is surprising how little emphasis has been given to the unitary character of early Medieval thought. Philosophy, theology, and religious experience are necessarily fused in a culture in which the Logos, second person of the Trinity, is the root, source, and ultimate criterion of both religious life and reason. To be a believer, for Anselm, meant to live both in God and in reason.

THE ARGUMENT IN CONTEXT

Anselm and the *Proslogion* argument can be understood only in the light of his cultural horizon, a commonplace which textual exegesis has all too easily forgotten. Of greater import is modernity's distaste for and ignorance of the religious roots of Anselm's thought. Dom Jean Leclercq has done yeoman service by indicating that, from the eighth to the twelfth century, it is possible to distinguish something like two middle ages in the West, one monastic, the other scholastic.¹³ The first was a continuation of Patristic culture in another age and civilization; the second was generated by the Carolingian renaissance, the town and cathedral schools. Anselm exegesis usually stresses the scholastic and ignores the monastic.

Viewed from the perspective of monastic culture, the *Proslogion* argument presents itself as what, for want of a better term, can be called a gnosis. This was suggested by Gilson some four decades ago but was never fully developed either by him or others.¹⁴ By gnosis here is meant simply a praying in thought in which the source of reality, truth, and justice displays Himself as existent. The *Proslogion*, in fact, takes the form of a pilgrimage within stability (*perigrinatio in stabilitate*) in which the human soul endeavors to recover its original status, the divine image becoming progressively more articulate, as it comes into closer communion with the indwelling Trinity. Because of this, Anselm cannot be considered either a modern rationalist or a mystic, a dichotomy grounded on reason severed from religious experience. In the *Proslogion* reason exercises not only the task of providing answers or constructing demonstrations, but also the therapeutic work of purifying the mind, thereby disposing it for an experience that transcends discursive reason.

It is difficult if not impossible to keep to the purely scholastic (logical) interpretation once *Proslogion* XIV-XVIII is given the attention which it merits. Although God has been found through demonstration He has yet to be experienced, and Anselm made it very clear that this experience is the ultimate fulfillment of the argument's quest. This insistence does away with the rather naive understanding that the argument ends in *Proslogion* III or IV, the remainder of the treatise being merely a sort of pious afterthought. It is an integral part of the argument itself. Anselm, emulating Plato and Augustine, simply shifted his attention from the product of intellectual vision—the conclusion that God is greater than can

be thought-to the sun, the source of that light by which we “see” intellectually. The search for truth as known is expanded into the search for truth as known and experienced. This aspect of the *Proslogion* has been all but ignored and merits careful attention.

“The *Proslogion* is, then, as far as we know, neither a treatise on philosophy, nor a treatise on theology, nor a mystical contemplation.”¹⁵ This evaluation of the *Proslogion*, given by Gilson some decades ago, still rings true as a reflection of the perplexity which the argument has been and is generating. Not unlike other exegetes, he was troubled by the apparent inconsistency between Anselm’s method, which is “purely rational”, and his object, which is “transcendent to reason”.¹⁶ Gilson concluded that this radically unique form can be compared only with a Christian gnosticism after the manner of St. Clement of Alexandria.¹⁷ Centering his argument on Anselm’s use of the word *contemplatio*, he very correctly rejected Dom Anselme Stolz’ contention that the *Proslogion* is a piece of mystical theology.¹⁸

Anselm used the term *contemplatio* (contemplation) only a few times, and the meaning ranges from the purely religious—in one of his prayers he speaks of “eternal contemplation of the glory of Jesus”¹⁹—to the strictly intellectual. He described the ‘heretics of dialectic’ as men whose minds are so covered over by corporeal images that they cannot extricate from among them those things which should be contemplated purely and in isolation.²⁰ Again, the *Cur Deus Homo* was written explicitly “not to attain to faith by way of reason, but to find delight in the understanding and contemplation of what they already believe.”²¹ The *Proslogion* was written “from the point of view of one striving to raise his mind to contemplating God and seeking to understand what he believes.”²² In a letter to Gunther, who seems to have hesitated in accepting the office of Abbot, Anselm advised that he obey the demands of charity. Instead of living a life of contemplation alone, Gunther should accept the dignity, always keeping in his heart the love of contemplation.²³ Finally, in another letter, Anselm emphasized the importance of stimulating seculars to long for heaven, and described the *Proslogion* as that work in which he treated “the plenitude of eternal blessedness”.²⁴

These texts obviously do not present a uniform character. Where one text would seem to justify a ‘spiritual’ interpretation, close to what later writers would call mystical contemplation, others point to a purely cogni-

tive, philosophical contemplation, close if not identical to the *theoria* of ancient philosophy. That *contemplatio* was the Roman translation for *theoria* seems to further complicate matters, especially as the concept had suffered an amazing metamorphosis since its use by the Hellenic philosophers. *Theoria*, to Aristotle, signified a unique attitude toward the world in which truth and only truth is aimed at, a directedness toward reality characterized solely by the desire that the world will show itself to be such as it is in reality.²⁵ It is the free discipline par excellence which is, in fact, good for nothing as it has no practical use. It is, in the strictest sense, the science of truth.²⁶ Over sixteen centuries later, Thomas Aquinas will reiterate this dictum in the form proper to his age: “first philosophy is not practical, but speculative; it is equally that which rightly ought to be called the science of truth.”²⁷

But whatever continuity exists between Aristotle and Aquinas certainly did not hold for the early Middle Ages, in which the works of Aristotle were almost unknown, except for the *logica vetus*, transmitted mainly through Boethius. By this time, as Dom Jean Leclercq has shown, the word *theoria* was often accompanied by adjectives which indicate that it was now understood as participation, an anticipation of celestial contemplation, the vision of God: as *theoria caelestis* and *theoria divina*.²⁸ In these ‘benedictine centuries’, *theoriae studia* did not usually signify theoretical studies but rather love of prayer, and the archetype of the philosopher and philosophy was no less than Christ Himself: “*ipsa philosophia Christus*.”²⁹ Furthermore, in monastic literature, well into the twelfth century, the expression *christiana philosophia* very often stood for the monastic life.³⁰



The two influences which could have moulded Anselm’s notion of *contemplatio* and which we should at least mention are Augustine and Gregory the Great. In the *De Trinitate*, the contemplation of God ‘face to face’ is promised as the end of our actions and the perfection of our joys, a joy that will never be taken from us.³¹ In another treatise, Augustine stated that contemplation begins in this life to be perfected in the next.³² Withal, however, Augustine applied *contemplatio* to a wide spectrum of not very closely allied phenomena, from the opera-

tions of the speculative intellect and the intellectual apprehension of philosophical or theological truth, to the adumbration of the beatific vision.

Gregory's notion of *contemplatio* was more strictly spiritual, the *raptum per transitum* in which heaven is opened and a faint glimpse of eternity is vouchsafed. It is a moment of delight in God, a wisdom that already flavors its object, "sapor, non satietas" ("taste, not satiety"). Contemplation is that knowledge through love to which all men in some degree tend but which only the 'elect' experience to its fullest, a rapture in which the soul is raised beyond itself.³³

This metamorphosis of Hellenic *theoria* into Christian *contemplatio* is made even more difficult to comprehend by those scholars who somewhat naively maintain that the platonic-aristotelian notion of *theoria* in some ways included the Christian *contemplatio*, that it in fact completes our notion of the act of philosophizing.³⁴ This interpretation runs in the face of rather overwhelming evidence pointing to a widespread if not basic antagonism between Greek philosophy and Christianity, from Paul's warning the Colossians against hollow and delusive speculations,³⁵ to Jerome's dream,³⁶ and Tertullian's fulminations grounded on the fundamental antagonism between Athens and Jerusalem.³⁷ On the other hand, a parallel, if not equally *autochthonous*, current may also be appealed to: Justin Martyr and - most important for the present study - the Alexandrians. Nevertheless, warnings against *curiositas*, viz., a centering of attention on whatever is not God or in the service of salvation, became a commonplace in the early Middle Ages, and were found previously in many texts in Augustine.³⁸ It was taken for granted that certain sacred things-say the Eucharist-should not be calmly scrutinized but rather viewed with stupor et admiratio. In Anselm's lifetime, Alexander of Jumieges wrote a treatise entitled *De praescientia Dei, contra curiosos* ("On the Prescience of God, Against the Inquisitive").³⁹

It is instructive to note that interest in *curiositas* has surfaced once again in contemporary philosophy. Pieper has indicated that it is the degeneration of the desire to 'see' and is a type of intemperance,⁴⁰ while Heidegger noted that this 'seeing' does not strive after the attainment of knowledge but rather after the possibilities of relinquishing oneself to the world.⁴¹ Today, *curiositas* has the effect of generating a means of gratification which is always available and must perforce be

disciplined by that sort of temperance which would be an 'asceticism of cognition - the phrase is Pieper's⁴²-to ensure both a worthy human life and the possibility of a true 'seeing' of reality.

THE PURPOSE OF SPECULATION: ANSELM'S POSITION

Where does Anselm stand? Aime Forest once indicated that the historian's greatest difficulty in regard to Anselm is to determine the proper function of speculation in the religious life.⁴³ This difficulty is reflected in the evident disaffection with which Dom Jean Leclercq-a discerning exegete of Anselm and his times from the point of view of spirituality-views his use of "the work of the intellect", his "slightly ingenuous, possibly exaggerated, confidence in reason."⁴⁴ Anselm's confidence is "disappointed" and since reason cannot satisfy his longing to love God, he turns to "fervent prayer".⁴⁵ This interpretation, as should be clear by now, is unacceptable, but it is with these difficulties in mind that we can return to the *Proslogion* text. However, it may well be advantageous to rephrase Forest's question, not asking about the proper function of speculation in the religious life, but rather about the proper function of the religious life within speculation. This modification is justified for many reasons, not the least important of which are those texts, among which the *Proslogion* is central, which seem to point to the fact that Anselm was seeking, as the goal of speculation, an experience of God-'experiri', 'experientia', 'experimentum' recur.⁴⁶ A rather obscure passage of the *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* also suggests that experience may lead to a knowledge higher than that obtained through hearing.⁴⁷

There is one important particular which should be noted here: the practical orientation of Anselm's thought. In his first work, the *Monologion*, Anselm insisted that reason "exists" for the purpose of judging what is good and what is evil and choosing the former. Reason is primarily displayed in judgment, judgment of the degree of goodness, and, in accordance with the degree of goodness which a thing possesses, in loving it to a greater or lesser extent. Reason, in fact, would be altogether superfluous unless it loved that which it judges to be good and condemned that which it judges to be evil.⁴⁸ Anselm postulated a type of progression in the full constitution of man: God gives a rational being to 'nothing' so that it may become a 'loving soul', and ultimately enjoy God Himself.⁴⁹ Everything in man, rationality included, is di-

rected toward this final goal. It is not without significance that the *Proslogion* ends with a meditation on the joy of the blessed.

For Anselm, as for Augustine, knowledge is directed to its completion in wisdom, itself directed towards ultimate vision. This is why reason can be considered either from the perspective of its own work, autonomously, or from that of its function within the *fides-intellectus-visio* schema. From the first perspective, the goal of thought is to arrive at truth, that is, rectitude perceptible by the mind alone. From the second-and hence the primacy of judgment-a grasping of truth which remains sterile, imprisoned within the cognitive order without generating love, is useless. From the point of view of man's ultimate end, reason is a function by which man comes to love God, the object of his existence, who is present to his memory. In using memory, reason, and will (love) to consider "that which is above all else", the rational creature fulfills its desire to express, through voluntary imitation, that divine image which nature has implanted within it. The privileged status of the human mind (*mens*) is clearly reflected in the *Proslogion*, where mind is described as that inner chamber of the soul where the image of God dwells, and where the soul is able to remember, think, and love God.⁵⁰ In the *Monologion*, the unique importance of the 'rational soul' is spelled out in detail, repeating, and extending, and adding precision to typical Augustinian themes; the *mens rationis* is that which most resembles God. Though every being, insofar as it exists, has some likeness to Him, the rational soul alone is capable of rising to the investigation of the Supreme Being.⁵¹ It is through the mind that God is approached; the more that it discovers about its own nature the higher does it rise in the knowledge of God.⁵² In its ability to know, remember, and love itself, the mind is an image of the Trinity; in its ability to remember, know, and love God, it becomes a truer image, this activity being equated by Anselm with wisdom itself.⁵³ As this is the goal and purpose of human existence, it follows that a 'rational creature' should devote all of his ability and will to that activity for which he was created.⁵⁴

Thinking is then directed, as Gilson indicated, to a transcendent object in a purely rational way. But instead of this being viewed as a somewhat unsettling paradox it should be understood as the logical outcome of a peculiarly unitary view of the human mind, and its relation to ultimate reality which Gilson, as a follower of St. Thomas, could not accept. Although it is far too early to

attempt to come to a conclusion, it seems, on the rather shaky basis of the preceding remarks, that Anselm continued classical *theoria* in the great importance he gave to the activity of thought, but departed from it in giving it a practical orientation, that he approached the 'spiritual' sense of Christian *contemplatio* in making the vision of God the ultimate goal of life and hence of thought, but stopped short of mystical contemplation in the strict sense. Whether or not these preliminary observations are to be accepted will be determined only by a review of those sections of the *Proslogion* text which bear on the matter under consideration.

THE *PROSLOGION* ITSELF.- EXPERIENCING GOD

Of special importance are chapters XIV-XXVI, where one encounters, in the words of Evdokimov, the *Proslogion's* 'apophatic' aspect.⁵⁵ The interpretive importance of *Proslogion* XIV has only recently been noted, albeit inadequately, by de Lubac.⁵⁶ Anselm here, having 'found' and 'understood' God "with certain truth and true certitude",⁵⁷ returns to a theme already encountered in *Proslogion* I: although man is created to see God, he has not yet accomplished that for which he was created. God has been found, true enough, but solely on the level of intellect and this is not an exhaustive seeing: "Why does my soul not feel you, O Lord God, if it has discovered you?"⁵⁸ A true 'seeing', a real encounter with God, cannot be limited to demonstration through necessary reasons, but must also include experience. This experience as indicated in the *Proslogion* is ultimately the joy, the "joy indeed full, and more than full" ("gaudium quoddam plenum, et plus quam plenum")⁵⁹ of the blessed.

Rationality, as previously indicated, is justified by its practical, which is to say, its moral use. It is primarily the capacity for moral discernment, a discernment ultimately directed towards the possession and enjoyment of God. Knowledge is then always knowledge of good and evil and the propaedeutic to love which is itself manifested through joy. Because of this-previously cited texts should preclude the charge of arbitrariness-knowledge which is restricted to the sphere of intellect alone would be a truncated thing at best. It would, in fact, militate against the very purpose of creation, which is to create rational, just, happy natures, destined to enjoy God.⁶⁰

Proslogion XIV is then an affirmation that the argument has not been terminated, that the proof found in

the second through fourth chapters, though satisfactory from the viewpoint of reason, still leaves something to be desired, that there is an element yet to be incorporated, and this element is experience. Anselm desires to see clearly what he desires, “to experience You.”⁶¹ This theme runs through chapters XVI, XVII and XVIII and even further, while joy emerges as that privileged experience to which the believer, through his rational activity, gravitates. If particular goods are enjoyable, argued Anselm, one must carefully note how enjoyable is that good which contains the joyfulness of all goods. This is doubtless something completely unique, “not such as we have experienced in created things, but as different as the Creator differs from the creature.”⁶²

Proslogion XX V is an almost rhapsodic tribute to the joy of the ‘sons of God’ in whom the love of God with whole heart, mind and soul generates such immense joy that “the whole soul is not sufficient for the plenitude of joy.”⁶³ Knowledge and love of God will grow ‘here’ and be made complete ‘there’; joy will be great in hope ‘here’ and be complete ‘there’.⁶⁴ The life of vision is not radically severed from the present life, but rather is its goal and completion. Growth in knowledge and love constitute the bridge which connects the present life with the future life, this exile to that real native land.

CONTEMPLATION.- THE ROLES OF GRACE AND SIN

A further important theme initiated in *Proslogion* XIV is the distinction between that which the mind discovers in the light and truth, and the Light-Truth itself. From the truth which is ‘light of the understanding’, Anselm moved to that light which is the source of all truth, “that truth in which is everything that is true and outside of which there is only nothingness and falsehood.”⁶⁵ This is to say, the argument is displaced from the domain of cognition, as primarily reflected in *Proslogion* II-IV (seen in the truth), to the Truth itself. If a spatial metaphor were adequate one could say that the movement of the *Proslogion* changes from a horizontal to a vertical level, somewhat reminiscent of the ascent from *dianoia* to *noesis* in the *Republic’s* (VI) analogy of the divided line.

The universe of discourse is assuredly different. One is no longer dealing with the laborious process of discernment and moral purification by which the ‘lover of appearances’ rises to the contemplation of reality and

its source, propelled by eros, ensconced within nature, confident of the capabilities of human nature. Here the mystery of grace prevails, the seed received through hearing is germinated by faith, and dialectic is gradually transformed into a prayer seeking contemplation. The action is primarily that of God, not that of man. Once this is taken into consideration, the similarity between the *Proslogion* and the *Republic*, in this one respect, the ascent from *dianoia* to *noesis*, may prove to be the point of departure for the exploration of further possibilities.

In the very first chapter, Anselm referred to the inaccessible light in which God dwells;⁶⁶ *Proslogion* XVI equates this “highest and inaccessible light” with “total and blessed truth”.⁶⁷ Although this ‘light’ overwhelms the intellect-man is always restricted by his limitations- whatever the mind ‘sees’ it ‘sees’ through this ‘light’.⁶⁸ The paradoxical still pursued Anselm. Being closer to God, through the understanding which proceeds from faith, he was still far from Him as experience was lacking.⁶⁹ The reason for this has previously been given; it is original sin. The ‘senses’ of the soul have become ‘hardened’, ‘dulled’, ‘obstructed’, because of the “longstanding sluggishness of sin” (“vetusto languore peccati”).⁷⁰ The eighteenth chapter, although it begins on a less than optimistic note- “I strove to ascend to the light of God and I have fallen back into my own darkness”⁷¹ -uses the customary rhetorical and scriptural turns to implore God to ensure the ascent in progressive knowledge, joy and happiness: “Let my soul regain its strength, and again with all its understanding direct itself to you, Lord.”⁷²

In his *Responsio*, Anselm again referred to the light metaphor, this time quite interestingly relating it to the description of God as ‘that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought’. He agreed with Gaunilo’s contention that the description cannot be fully understood but added that it would be mistaken to conclude that it cannot be understood to any extent whatsoever: “then you must say that one who cannot see the purest light of the sun directly does not see daylight, which is the same thing as the light of the sun.”⁷³ The description of God cannot be fully comprehended but it can be understood in part, insofar as certain characteristics are understood, such as, for example, that it refers to a necessary being, not composed of parts, existing as a whole at every time and in every place: “Surely, then, ‘that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought’ is understood and is in the mind to the extent that we understand these things about it.”⁷⁴ The Johanine origin of the light-metaphor is betrayed

by the first lines of that section of his *De Veritate* dedicated to the truth of natural and non-natural actions. God states that “he who does evil hates the light” and “he who does the truth comes into the light.” It follows that there is truth in actions.⁷⁵ Here Anselm was simply emphasizing the ubiquity of *rectitudo*, that even actions are subsumed under this norm, in such a way that they can be said to be ‘doing’ the truth.

This ‘doing’ must be understood in an extremely broad sense, as including not only other actions, but ‘doing’ the truth, and ‘doing’ good.⁷⁶ Whosoever, then, abides in rectitude—both truth and good are subsumed under the term—comes to the light.⁷⁷ The necessary precondition for this ascent appears to be, then, the annealing of all human activity by rectitude which undoes the ‘curvature’ caused by original sin and points man to his ultimate goal. It is not imprudent, at this juncture, to entertain the possibility that rigorous thinking, the expansion of *fides* into *intellectum*, must form an integral moment of this process.

As we have seen, the five chapters beginning with *Proslogion* XIV, emphasize the difficulty of thinking about God and the futility of any pretension to exhaustive knowledge. However, the first obstacle is somehow vanquished, and Anselm went on to speculate about God qua Supreme Good, the Trinity, the state of the blessed, and his hopes for the possession of overflowing joy in the eschaton. It is again necessary to stress the change of direction which has previously been indicated; from reasoning with ‘light’, Anselm now approached the ‘light’ itself. It is not too far afield to describe this process as a ‘praying in thought’ and for this reason, among others, Gilson’s characterization of the *Proslogion* as a “Christian gnosticism”, comparable with the doctrine of Clement of Alexandria, has been retained in spite of any objections which could be raised.

None the less, this comparison should not be abused. Great similarities between Anselm’s *Proslogion* and Clement’s doctrine do exist: the intertwining of speculation and prayer, understanding as a spiritual exigency, contemplation as the goal of speculation, the stress on reason to the point of being considered suspect by less intellectual brethren.⁷⁸ But differences also exist, perhaps the principal issuing from the difference in the cultural and spiritual milieu. Clement seemed to equate reason with Greek philosophy, a far from outrageous notion. But it did rather embarrass him as it has to be incorpo-

rated, it appears somewhat arbitrarily, into a hierarchy of which the gnosis of Christ is the highest level.⁷⁹ On the contrary, in Anselm reason is, apparently without great effort on his part, assimilated into the ascent to God. As previously noted, faith is expanded into understanding, understanding generates love, and love strives for the possession and fruition of the beloved, God.



FEATURES OF ANSELM’S APPROACH

Let us then return to the *Proslogion*, and, in the light of previous discussion, point to those features which perhaps have gone unnoticed. First of all, the emphasis Anselm placed on the continuity between the present and the future life might be considered. Here, he was stating in another, more ample manner his belief that understanding is the mean between faith and vision, that the more a person advances in understanding the closer he approaches vision.⁸⁰ The *Proslogion* reflects the radically intimate relationship between reason and spirituality, thought and prayer. The movement of reason regarding God, taking place, as it does, under the aegis of faith, is itself a sort of prayer as it gives witness to the truth. Thought and prayer are not completely separate activities but form part of the one movement towards the possession and fruition of God.

Leclercq was mistaken in faulting Anselm with a slightly ingenuous, possibly exaggerated, confidence in reason and viewing him as a disgruntled rationalist who was forced to turn to prayer. Quite the opposite is true. Prayer and rational argument do not meet in the *Proslogion* as opposing forces, each struggling to supplant the other, but are found together as integral parts of one process. Faith gives reason ‘spiritual wings’ and thus overcomes the perennial temptation to institute a spiritually and theoretically barren ‘self-satisfied science’.⁸¹ The more a thing is known as good the more it is loved. Reasoning about God has the same goal as prayer—to incite the mind to love of God.⁸² Prayer, in its most ample sense, is assuredly not a placebo for a disappointed rationalist, but rather the natural outgrowth of rigorous thinking by means of necessary reasons.

The second particular that merits notice is that

the unique joy found by Anselm, “*gaudium plenum, et plus quam plenum*”, is not experienced at present, but is here great in hope (*in spe*). Only in the other life will this joy be complete in reality, “*et ibi sit in re plenum*.”⁸³ From this perspective the most that could be said is that the *Proslogion* argument cannot be verified in this life, at least as far as the aspect under consideration is concerned.

Nonetheless, this rules out a rigorously mystical interpretation of the argument, such as that presented by Dom Anselme Stolz,⁸⁴ and rejected by Gilson. The *Proslogion* is not a piece of mystical theology. Although Dom Anselme was right in emphasizing the spiritual nature of the argument—the passage from faith to vision⁸⁵—still, this transition does not take place within the *Proslogion* itself but is merely given as a future possibility and the object of the theological virtue of hope. This fits in line with what has been discussed previously: the practical-moral orientation of Anselm’s notion of reason. In the *Proslogion*, there is a transition, but one from the existence of God to His nature and the consequent centering of attention on Divine Goodness. Existence dominates the first section of the *Proslogion*, while the good is emphasized after the fifth chapter. ‘Something-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought’ is first attributed existence *in re* (*Proslogion* II), next attributed necessary existence (*Proslogion* III), and then identified with the *Summum Bonum*, which comprises ‘whatever-it-is-better-to-be-than-not-to-be’ (*Proslogion* V). *Proslogion* XXII again identifies this being who exists in a strict and absolute sense (“*qui proprie et simpliciter est*”) as the one and Supreme Good (“*non est nisi unum et summum bonum*”).⁸⁶ The final chapters continue speculation as to the nature of this Good and the character of the fruition which its possession ensures, intimations of the joy of the Lord (*gaudium domini*).

That the *Proslogion* was intended both as a meditation for the believer and a proof for the unbeliever has become a commonplace of Anselmian scholarship,⁸⁷ and is certainly true as far as it goes. The very nature of a *meditatio*, a hybrid form in which prayer and speculation merge, which Anselm was instrumental in shaping, is more to the point at hand. *Meditatio* occurs very rarely in the Benedictine rule and refers to monastic activities such as learning the Psalter and preparing the lessons for the Office.⁸⁸ Yet, under the influence of Anselm, meditation suffered a radical metamorphosis and Chenu could speak of meditation as a strictly personal assimilative process which tends towards a grasp of the deeper na-

ture of things.⁸⁹ As a speculative form meditation would fail to conform to the exigencies of the procrustean bed provided by the *Summae*, and would pass out of existence as a viable instrument for mind and spirit. In this, it reflected the gradual disappearance of monastic culture as a speculative force under the increasing pressure of scholastic culture which reached its apogee in the thirteenth century. The quasi-geometrical structure of the *Summae* simply did not admit of the literary style and experience-oriented form of the meditation. Demonstration would ultimately purge itself of the last traces of spirituality which would be relegated to the province of mystical theology.

But the *Proslogion* is much more than a speculative form. Hegel viewed the ‘ontological argument’ not merely as a proof justified by the Logic but the description of thought as the concrete march towards God, which justifies the Logic. And, as Lauer noted, Hegel’s *Logic* depends for its validity on the validity of the ontological proof⁹⁰ It would indeed be difficult to quarrel with “thought as the concrete march towards God”, as an acceptable description of the argument if inserted within an Anselmian context. The considerations presented in this study may lend credence to an analogous interpretation, the ultimate noetic consequence of the incarnation of the Logos, arche, and telos, the ‘light’ and the ‘life’ of man.⁹¹

Once we have come this far and look back so as to collect our previous observations, we find some interesting conclusions. First of all, Anselm postulated that thinking rigorously about God is an approach of the whole man to God, that real understanding is a step towards ultimate fruition. A thinking about God lacking this direction would not be a true understanding, but a mere simulacrum limited to an order in which it remains unfruitful, in open contradiction with its own purpose and function. To put it bluntly: thought in regard to God which is not a sort of prayer, is not true thought. Secondly, thought has an eminently practical nature. In contradistinction to the classic *theoria* it is supereminently useful, acting as the medium of access to the goal of human life. We are already familiar with the movement from thought to judgment to love to fruition; *theoria* is not abolished but is ensconced within the moral order. This does not mean that the atheist or immoralist can not possess to some extent, knowledge concerning God. The problem resides in the negative and isolated character of this knowledge. Not directed towards vision, prisoner

within the cognitive realm, it can only stagnate if not activated by grace. Thirdly, viewed under the perspective of gnosis, the *Proslogion* can be demonstrated only eschatologically, there where the fullness of knowledge, love and joy are encountered. In this sense, the argument escapes the usual canon of demonstration and transcends philosophy understood as an antiseptically rational undertaking.

To view the *Proslogion* as gnosis may well raise serious objections but it is only by doing so that the fullness

and dignity of the argument can be duly appreciated. Not to do so would reduce it to a caricature of itself. This does not in any way minimize the properly philosophical aspect of the argument but suggests that even this aspect can be considered within a wider context. Demonstration may know nothing of an eschatological verification, but if the argument does reach out towards ultimate vision, it must do so by way of truth. And here we return to the 'ontological' argument of the *Proslogion* II-IV and to the threshold of new and interesting inquiries, but also, to the end of this study.



NOTES

- 1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures in the Philosophy of Religion* (N.Y.: The Humanities Pr., 1962), III, p.159ff; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (N.Y.: The Humanities Press, 1965), p.63ff.
- 2 Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery: A Re-examination of the Ontological Proof for the Existence of God* (LaSalle: Open Court, 1962).
- 3 Norman Malcolm, *Anselm's Ontological Arguments* in *Philosophical Rev.* LXIX (1960), pp.42-52.
- 4 *Pour ou contre l'insense* (Paris: Vrin, 1967).
- 5 *Spicilegium Beccense* (Paris: Vrin, 1959). Ed. by P. Gramont and monks of the Abbaye Notre-Dame du Bec.
- 6 *Analecta Anselmiana: Untersuchungen uber Person und Werk Anselms von Cantorbury* (Frankfurt/ Main: Minerva GMBH), Vol. I(1969), Vol. II (1970), Vol. III (1972). Ed. by K. Flasch; G. Geyer; H.K. Kohlenberger; C. Ottaviano; R. Rogues; and R.W. Southern.
- 7 A. Koyre, *Saint Anselme de Cantorbery: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (Paris: Vrin, 1964).
- 8 John Smith, *Experience and God* (New York: Oxford U. Pr., 1968).
- 9 Merle Allshouse, *An Evaluation of Anselm's Ontological Argument* (Unpub. doct. diss.) University Microfilms: Ann Arbor, No. 66-4877.
- 10 Xavier Zubiri, *Sobre el problema de la filosofia* in *Revista de Occidente*, Madrid, No. 118, Abril, 1933, p.108ff, also *Introduccion al problema de Dios in Naturaleza, Historia, Dios* (Madrid: Ed. Nacional, 1963).
- 11 Henri Dumery, *The Problem of God in Philosophy of Religion* (Chicago: Northwestern U. Press, 1964).
- 12 Karl Barth, *Fides quaerens inillectum: Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes in Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1958).
- 13 Jean Leclercq, O.S.B., *The Love of Learning and the Desirefor God* (N.Y.: Mentor, 1962). See also Sofia Vanni Rovighi, *Questo mirabile secolo XII* in *Studium*, 54 (1958).
- 14 He cited the gnosis of Clement of Alexandria to evoke the complexity and richness of the *Proslogion*. Etienne Gilson, *Sense et nature de l'argument de S. Anselme* in *Arch. d'hist. doct. et litt. du moyen age* (1934), p.49ff. Dom Jean Leclercq wrote: "The Christian gnosis, the 'true gnosis', in its original fundamental, and orthodox meaning, is that kind of higher knowledge which is the complement, the fruition of faith, and which reaches completion in prayer and contemplation.. .beyond a doubt, it is this comparison [to a gnosis] which gives the closest idea of St. Anselm's intellectual research, his applied dialectics, and mystical transcendence." *Love of Learning*, 215.
- 15 Etienne Gilson, op. cit., p.43: "Le *Proslogion* n'est donc, autant que nous sachions, ni un traite de philosophie ni un traite de theologie, ni une contemplation mystique."
- 16 Ibid., 47.
- 17 Ibid., 51.
- 18 "J'amaï, a ma connaissance, il n'a designe la contemplation de Dieu, telle que la decrit le *Proslogion*, comme une experience de Dieu, et je n'arrive pas a trouver, dans tous les textes cites par le P. Stolz a l'appui de sa these, une seule formule ou le mot sait employe par Saint Anselme." Ibid., p.35. For Dom Stolz' interpretation, refer to *Zur Theologie Anselms in Proslogion*, trans. by A.C. McGill, *Anselm's Theology in the Proslogion in The Many-Faced Argument*, ed. by

Hick and McGill (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1967)183-206.

19 *Oratio* (Opera III)16, 88: “aeterna contemplatio gloriae Iesu.”

20 *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* I (Opera II), 10, 1-4.

21 *Cur Deus Homo* (Opera II), 47, 8-9ff.

22 *Proslogion, prooemium* (Opera II), 93, 21094, 2: “sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit.”

23 *Epistola* 345 (Opera V); 283, 24-27.

24 *Epistola* 112 (Opera III); 246, 74-77: “de plenitudine beatitudinis aeternae.”

25 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2,1; 993b, 19-20ff. 1-2; 982b 27. Refer to a simple direct presentation in Josef Piper, *Verteidigungsrede für die Philosophie* (Munich: Kosel-Verlag), trans. A. Lator Ros, *Defensa de la Filosofía* (Barcelona: Ed. Herder, 1973), esp. pp. 45-93.

26 Idem.

27 Aquinas, *In Metaphysics*, 2, 1; No. 290. See also No. 297. “philosophia prima non est practica sed speculativa, aequetur quod recte debeat diciscientia veritatis.”

28 Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, 106.

29 H. Rochais, *Ipsa philosophia Christus in Medieval Studies* (1951),244-247.

30 Leclercq, op. cit., p. 108.

31 *De Trinitate*, 1, 17; 1, 20.

32 Ibid., *Tract. in Ioan.* CXXIV, 5

33 Refer to *Moralia*, 10, 13; 8,49-50; 31, 101; in Ezech. I, 10, 26; in *Evangelia*, 14.4. Competent discussion of this aspect of Gregory in Leclercq, Vondenbroucke, and Bouyer, *La Spiritualité du Moyen Age*, trans. by Benedictines of Holme Eden Abbey, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages* (London: Burns and Oates, 1968) 3-31. Also Dom Cuthlert Butler, *Western Mysticism* (London: Arrow, 1960), pp. 124-154.

34 Pieper, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

35 Colossians 2, 8-10. *The New English Bible*. The trans. of the Jerusalem Bible is curious: “Makes sure that no one traps you and deprives you of your freedom by some secondhand, empty, rational philosophy, based on the principles of this world instead of on Christ.”

36 Jerome tells of a dream in which, appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, he heard the words, “Thou a Christian! You are a Ciceronian! Where the heart is, there is its treasure!” *Epist. XXII ad Eustochium*, par. 29, 30. Cited in H.O. Taylor, *The Emerg. of Christ. Cult. in the West*, 109.

37 *De Praescriptionibus Adversus Hereticos*, VII, X; cited in Taylor (above).

38 *De Utilitate Credendi*, 9,22; *Sermo*. 112, 5; *De Vera Religione*, 49,94; *Confessiones* II, 6, 13; et al.

39 Cited in Leclercq, *Love of Learning*, P. 204.

40 Josef Pieper, *The Timelessness and Timeliness of the Cardinal Virtues* (London: Netherhall House, 1974), pp. 21-22.

41 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Seventh edition, Tübingen: Neomarius Verlag), trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, *Being and Time* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1962), Sect. 36, pp. 214-17, H. 170-73.

42 Pieper, loc. cit..

43 Aime Forest, F. von Steenberghen, M. de Gandillac, *Le Mouvement doctrinale du XIe au XIVe siècle* (Paris: Boud and Gay, 1951), 52.

44 Leclercq et al., *Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, pp. 165-66.

45 Idem., p. 166.

46 Texts in Anselme Stolz, *Das Proslogion des HL Anselm* in *Revue Benedictine*, XLVII (1935), pp. 336-346.

47 *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* 1; 9, 3-8.

48 *Monologion*, LXVIII; 78, 21-29, 5.

49 Ibid., LXX; 80, 15-25.

50 *Proslogion*, I; 100, 12-13.

51 *Monologion*, 66; 77, 17-20.

52 Ibid., 77, 20-24.

53 Ibid., 67; 78, 1-7.

54 Ibid., 68; 79, 6-9.

55 Paul Evdokimov, *L'Aspect Apophatique de L'argument de Saint Anselme* in *Spicilegium Beccense*, pp. 234-258.

- 56 Henri de Lubac, *Sur le chapitre XIVe du Prosligion* in *Ibid.*, 295-325.
- 57 *Prosligion*, XIV; 111, 12-13: “tam certa veritate et vera certitudine”.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 111, 14-15: “Cur non te sentit, domine deus, anima mea, si invenit te.”
- 59 *Ibid.*, XXVI; 120, 25-121, 1.
- 60 *Cur Deus Homo* (Opera II), II, 1; 97, 4-7. Also, *Ibid.* 97, 7-98, 5.
- 61 See note 58.
- 62 *Ibid.*, XXIV; 118, 2-3: “et non qualem in rebus creatis sumus experti, sed tanto differentem quanto differet creator a creatura.”
- 63 *Ibid.*, XXV; 120, 20: “tota anima non sufficiat plenitudini gaudii.”
- 64 *Ibid.*, XXVI; 121, 14-18.
- 65 *Ibid.*, XIV; 112, 6-8: “illa veritas, in qua est omne quod verum est, et extra quam non nisi nihil et falsum est.”
- 66 *Ibid.*, I; 98, 4-6.
- 67 *Ibid.*, XIV; 112, 20-113, 4, esp. 112, 27: “lux summa et inaccessibilis” and “tota et beata veritas”.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 112, 20-24.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 113, 2-4.
- 70 *Ibid.*, XVII; 113, 12-15.
- 71 *Ibid.*, XVIII; 114, 2: “conabar assurgere ad lucem dei, et recidi in tenebras meas.”
- 72 *Ibid.*, 114, 12-13: “Recolligat vires suas anima mea, et toto intellectu iterum intendat in te, domine.”
- 73 “Quod si dicis non intelligi et non esse in intellectu quod non penitus intelligitur: dic quia qui non potest intueri purissimam lucem solis, non videt lucem diei, quae non est nisi lux solis.” *Responsio*, I; 132, 5-7.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 132, 7-9: “certe vel hactenus intelligitur et est in intellectu ‘quo maius cogitari nequit,’ ut haec de eo intelligantur.”
- 75 *De Veritate* (Opera I); 181, 12-14ff: “qui male agit, odit lucem” and “qui facit veritatem, venit ad lucem.”
- 76 *Ibid.*, 181, 21-28.
- 77 *Idem.*
- 78 *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. W. Wilson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1872), Vol. II, *Stromata* II, 6; VI, 18; VII, 10 et al.
- 79 Nonetheless, the charge levelled against Clement that he believed that man’s supreme end is not love but knowledge, tends to emphasize the importance of his Hellenistic background. Refer to R. Mel Wilson, *The Gnostic Problem* (London: A.R Mawbray & Co., 1958), p. 134ff. Texts such as *Stromata* IV, XXII, in which knowledge of God is preferred over salvation and love is considered as the medium of access to knowledge seem to bear out this interpretation. *The Writings of Clement*, II, p.202ff.
- 80 *Cur Deus Homo, Commendatio*; 40, 10-12.
- 81 *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* (Opera II), I; 7, 6-10.
- 82 See esp. *Orationes sive Meditationes* (Opera III), prologus; 3, 1-4.
- 83 *Prosligion*, XXVI; 120, 25-121, 1.
- 84 Dom Anselme Stolz, op. cit.
- 85 *Ibid.*, pp. 185-87.
- 86 *Prosligion*, XXII; 116, 22 - 117. 2.
- 87 For example, in Southern, *St. Anselm and His Biographer*, p.63; et al.
- 88 *Regula*, cap. 8, 48, 58.
- 89 M.D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding Saint Thomas* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1963), p.81. Refer especially to the second section of Chapter II, pp. 80-96 in which meditation is compared to St. Thomas’ procedures of exposition.
- 90 Quentin Lauer, *Hegel on Proofs for God’s Existence in Kant-Studien* (Koln: Kolner Universitats-Verlag, 1964), Band 55, Heft 4; pp. 443-465, esp. p. 457.
- 91 John I, 4; 10; 14 et al. Refer also to Erich Przywara, *Christentum Gemass Johannes*, 15p. trans. B. Unrueta, *El Christianismo segun San Juan* (San Sebastian: Ediciones Dinor, 1961), pp. 41-72.