

**ANSELM'S FAITH AS ORIENTATION, CRITERION
AND PROMOTION OF PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY**

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Abstract

In this essay, I focus on the theological origins of the argument for the existence of God that Anselm develops in chapters 2-4 of the *Proslogion*. By 'theological origins' I mean that the *unum argumentum* was put forward in support of the truth (or at least of the internal consistency) of the Christian faith, whether the argument was intended to convince unbelievers or not. My aim is to demonstrate that, contrary to what is often believed, it is precisely the theological origins here under consideration that created the circumstances out of which Anselm developed a rigorous and original philosophical inquiry.

Introduction

In this essay, I focus on the theological origins of the argument for the existence of God that Anselm developed in chapters 2-4 of the *Proslogion*. By 'theological origins' I mean that the *unum argumentum* (henceforth UA¹) was put forward in support of the truth (or at least of the internal

¹ I will employ this expression in place of that, which is more widely used, of 'ontological argument'. Unlike the latter, the former is used by Anselm; furthermore, it avoids the risk of projecting on his thought views formulated in modern age. See below, footnote 5.

consistency) of the Christian faith, whether the argument was intended to convince unbelievers or not. My aim is to demonstrate that the theological origins under consideration, instead of preventing the UA from being an authentically philosophical enterprise, as is often believed, lay the best possible conditions to develop such enterprise.²

To this end, I first explore various interpretations of the UA offered by scholars of Anselm. Some of them think that the UA is mainly a theological argument whereas others say that it is mainly philosophical. I then argue that faith is *orientation* and *criterion* for philosophy, which implies that the UA is to be understood by making reference to its theological inspiration. I will conclude that, contrary to common assumptions, the belief, which is held by faith, that faith is orientation and criterion of philosophy *promoted* the latter to be as autonomous as possible from any external authority—faith included. Obviously enough, this means that the UA can be seen as an eminently philosophical argument.

Before proceeding, let me make a couple of clarifications. First, the fact that I focus on the UA does not mean that the outcome of my argument does not apply to Anselm's natural theology taken as a whole. Since there is continuity between the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*,³ my investigation pertains to both the UA and to the arguments for the existence of God that Anselm developed in the *Monologion*. However, my main focus is on the UA since the UA emphasizes the relationship between faith and reason, which allows me to develop my thesis that faith is orientation, criterion and promotion of philosophy. Second, I employ 'reason' bearing in mind the different meaning Anselm gives to 'reason' (*ratio*) and 'understanding' (*intellectus*). For Anselm, the former gives rise to chains of arguments aimed at achieving 'necessary reasons', and by no means appeals to the authority of Scripture. It is the *sola ratio* by which Anselm develops the arguments of the

² By 'philosophical,' as opposed to 'theological', I mean any intellectual activity that goes 'where reason leads.' For more on this, see below, footnote 48.

³ See below, footnotes 24ff.

Monologion. The latter, instead, makes reference to the Scripture, by which means it gives rise to the UA (God is ‘something than which nothing greater can be thought’), and is employed with the aim of achieving intimacy with God and others. It is the *intellectus* by which Anselm develops the *unum argumentum* in the *Proslogion*. With this distinction in mind, I will show that the philosophical activity Anselm develops is, on the one hand, ‘understanding’ because of its theological inspiration and, on the other hand, ‘reason’, because of its autonomy from any external authority—faith included.

1 Interpretations of the UA

Scholars of Anselm have often taken the UA as either a theological or a philosophical enterprise. It is in this context that, starting especially with the so-called ‘Anselm-Renaissance’ of the 20th and 21st centuries, many attempts to assess the UA have been put forward.⁴

Let’s look first at the attempts to see the UA as a theological argument (aimed at supporting the contents of faith), and not a philosophical one (aimed at proving that God exists to both believers and unbelievers). K. Barth is the most famous representative of this view. For him, Anselm based the UA on an article of faith, i.e., the revealed name of God, rather than a generic human concept:

⁴ A detailed but not verbose presentation is offered by G. Ortlund, *Anselm's Pursuit of Joy: A Commentary on the Proslogion* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2020), pp. 56ff. The author offers a convincing interpretation of the existing literature on the *Proslogion*, arguing that the overwhelming weight of such a literature has still been disproportionately focused on chapters 2-4. He offers a survey of works published on the *Proslogion* since 1950 and shows that they ‘uncovered more works on chapters 2-4 than the rest of the book roughly by a ratio of roughly 25 to 1.’ (p. 5).

The knowledge which the proof seeks to expound and impart is the knowledge that is peculiar to faith, knowledge of what is believed from what is believed. It is—and this is why it has to be sought in prayer—a knowledge that must be bestowed on man.⁵

In the footsteps of Barth, many other scholars have looked at the UA—and more generally at the *Proslogion*—as a theological work. A. Stolz offered an influential interpretation of the whole *Proslogion* as a work of mystical theology. For him, the term ‘faith seeking understanding’ stands for an attempt to ‘attain a vision of God through an understanding of what the faith says about God’. Accordingly, he goes so far as to claim that ‘nothing is more absurd than to see a philosopher in the author of the *Proslogion*’.⁶

In truth, the expression employed by Anselm—faith seeking understanding—would seem to indicate that his reflection is located within a predominantly theological context. This would be confirmed by the fact that, at the beginning of the *Proslogion*, Anselm employs three times the word ‘credimus’, which, unlike its English translation (‘we believe’), is traditionally used in the case of faith, as opposed to ‘scimus’ or ‘cognoscimus’ (‘we know’).⁷

⁵ K. Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum. Anselm’s Proof of the Existence of God in the context of his Theological Scheme* (1931), tr. I. Robertson (London and Southampton: SCM, 1960), p. 102. Based on this theological view of the UA, Barth rejects the widespread view according to which the UA is an ‘ontological’ argument. He therefore contends that Anselm’s argument ‘is in a different book altogether from the well-known teaching of Descartes and Leibniz’, which is why it is not ‘affected by what Kant put forward against these doctrines’ (p. 171). More recently, J.L. Marion has re-proposed this view, emphasizing the distance between Anselm and the Kantian definition of the ‘ontological argument’ (See J.L. Marion, ‘Is the Ontological Argument Ontological?’, in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 30 (1992), p. 203).

⁶ A. Stolz, *Anselm’s Theology in the Proslogion*, (1933), tr. by A. C. McGill, in J. Hick – A.C. McGill (eds), *The Many-Faced Argument. Recent Studies on the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God* (London—Melbourne: MacMillan 1968), pp. 185f. and 188.

⁷ This is the whole passage with which the second chapter starts: ‘Therefore, O Lord, You who give understanding to faith, grant me to understand—to the degree You know to be advantageous—that You

However, Anselm's formula does not seem to unequivocally trace back to the Bible. E. Wierenga points out that 'the Biblical authors do not attribute to God the properties generally thought to be required to be the greatest possible being.'⁸ An unequivocal resemblance emerges instead from various texts by Augustine,⁹ Boethius,¹⁰ and Seneca, who in his *Naturales Quaestiones* answers the question 'quid est deus?' by making use of practically the same words employed by Anselm: 'magnitudo (...) qua nihil maius cogitari potest'.¹¹ Furthermore, Anselm employs in some texts the word 'credimus' while referring to what we can rationally maintain about the divine substance.¹² Various reasons, in conclusion, seem to refute Barth's reading. It is not surprising that he has difficulties justifying how Anselm addresses equally both believers and non-believers.¹³

exist, as we believe, and that You are what we believe [You to be]. Indeed, we believe You to be something than which nothing greater can be thought (aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit)' (*Proslogion*, 2).

⁸ E. Wierenga, 'Augustinian Perfect Being Theology and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob', in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 69 (2011), p. 146.

⁹ Among the various texts that may be cited, see Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, I, 7, and *Confessiones*, VII, 4, 6.

¹⁰ See Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, bk. 3, pr. 9.

¹¹ Seneca, *Naturales quaestiones*, I, preface, 13. R. Southern notes that a copy of this work was in the library of the monastery of Bec in the twelfth century. Consequently, he suggests that this copy might have been there in Anselm's time also (see R. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), p. 129).

¹² In his *Reply to Gaunilo*, for example, he writes that 'we believe (*credimus*) about the Divine Substance whatever can in every respect be thought of as better [for something] to be than not to be (Anselm, *Reply to Gaunilo*, 10).

¹³ 'It can and must be asked, on the basis of his [Anselm's] presupposition: is he not deceiving himself when he thinks that his 'proofs' could ever be understood by the unbelievers, by those who *quaerunt, quia non credunt*, and when he thinks that not only is theological discussion possible with them, but that it should succeed—the question of revelation and of faith always left open—in convincing them of the reasonableness of the *Credo*? What kind of unbelievers could he have had in mind who allow themselves to be transported in this way *nolens volens* into the realm of theology?' (Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, p. 69). To do justice to Barth's reading, his proposal should probably be located in his more general reflection. Ortlund opportunely cites Barth's preface to the second edition of his work on Anselm:

It is in fact undeniable that Anselm's argument is of interest not only to believers but also to unbelievers. It is actually his whole work that, as E. Sweeney says, in Western thought

appears to be the prototype for the model of pure, neutral rationality. The audacity of Anselm's willingness to submit not just the existence of God but the Incarnation, Virgin birth, and *filioque* controversy to the bar of reason, seeking necessary and indubitable conclusions is unparalleled'.¹⁴

In antithesis to Stolz's view mentioned above, Sweeney goes so far as to say that Anselm is 'the medieval author who comes closest to the definition of philosopher in modern terms'.¹⁵ This view somewhat resembles the one famously maintained by E. Gilson, according to whom Anselm wanted to prove all of the truths of faith on rational grounds, which reveals that 'Anselm's confidence in reason's power of interpretation is unlimited'.¹⁶

At the same time, however, Gilson considered Anselm's *Proslogion*—as well as the remainder of Anselm's work—as a fideistic work, since 'this inquiry, as purely rational as it may be, forbids

'My interest in Anselm was never a side-issue for me (...) In this book on Anselm I am working with a vital key, if not the key, to an understanding of that whole process of thought that has impressed me more and more in my *Church Dogmatics* as the only one proper to theology'. Ortlund concludes that 'perhaps because of the significance of Anselm in Barth's own theological development, Barth's study on Anselm is at times more illuminating for explicating Barth's thought in dialogue with Anselm than for explicating Anselm himself. (Ortlund, , *Ascending Toward the Beatific Vision: Heaven as the Climax of Anselm's Proslogion*, PhD Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary 2016, p. 26).

¹⁴ E. C. Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), p. 2.

¹⁵ Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 2. Not surprisingly, scholars such as A. Plantinga, C. Hartshorne, and N. Malcom, to mention only those who have probably offered the most influential philosophical readings of the UA, have focused on it from a merely rational viewpoint.

¹⁶ E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (tr. New York: Random House 1995), p. 129.

itself any object other than that of faith and agrees with it entirely'.¹⁷ Gilson's interpretation seemed influenced by the distinction between philosophy and theology that Aquinas would define more than a century later--more precisely, the distinction between those truths of faith such as God's existence, which can also be demonstrated, and the ones that can only be accepted by faith.¹⁸ Seen from this perspective, Anselm turns out to be a rationalist, because he does not consider the distinction at stake, and tries to provide proofs in support of every revealed truth. At the same time, he is also a fideist, because he argues within the boundaries of the revealed truths and only with the aim of agreeing with them.¹⁹

M. J. Charlesworth seems to summarize this double interpretation when he claims that

if we stress the one side of his thought we can easily make Anselm into a rationalist for whom not only the 'preambles' or presuppositions of faith are rationally demonstrable, but also the mysteries of faith themselves. On the other hand, if we stress the other side of Anselm's thought we can easily make him into a quasi-fideist, maintaining that nothing can be known about God save on the basis of faith.²⁰

¹⁷ E. Gilson, 'Sens et nature de l'argument de Saint Anselme', in *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 9 (1934), p. 49, cit. in G. B. Sadler, 'Saint Anselm's Fides Quaerens Intellectum as a Model for Christian Philosophy', in *The Saint Anselm Journal*, 4 (2006), p. 53.

¹⁸ This is argued by Sadler, 'Saint Anselm's Fides Quaerens Intellectum as a Model for Christian Philosophy', p. 55, and accepted by Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 5.

¹⁹ In this connection, H.U. von Balthasar maintains that 'the question whether Anselm is a philosopher or a theologian is (...) quite superfluous and fundamentally misconceived: the anti-pagan polemic of the Fathers is no longer relevant nor is the separation of disciplines which began in the period of high scholasticism yet acute' (H. U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: Studies in Theological Style: clerical styles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1984), p. 213).

²⁰ M.J Charlesworth, 'Introduction', in *St. Anselm's Proslogion: with a Reply on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and the Author's Reply to Gaunilo*, tr. M.J. Charlesworth 1965 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1979), pp. 36f.

This, so Charlesworth maintains, is due to the fact that there are ‘two sides of Anselm’s thought’, which Charlesworth ascribes to *Monologion* 1 and *Proslogion* 1, respectively. According to him, the former emphasizes the importance of the ‘sola ratio’, whereas the latter is focused on the ‘fides quearens intellectum’, and this—so he says—is an unresolved contradiction in Anselm’s thought.²¹

If Charlesworth’s argument is correct, this inconsistency, which I may call the ‘problem of Anselm’, to use Sweeney’s words,²² fully explains why Anselm’s interpreters have adopted antithetical views of his epistemology.

As a consequence, the *Monologion* may be seen as a solitary work of reason (*sola ratione*), whereas the *Proslogion* may be considered a conversation with oneself, God, and the reader. The former would not rely on any authority, whereas the latter would look like a prayer and would include biblical references.²³

However, the idea that there is inconsistency between the two works in question is not convincing, as Sweeney shows in three steps. First, Anselm himself sees the two works as similar to each other. Second, though the figure of the ‘fool’ employed in the *Proslogion*, who says that God does not exist, is rooted in the Scriptures, ‘the role Anselm constructs for the fool is virtually identical to the figure of someone ignorant or disbelieving created in the *Monologion*’. Third, the *Proslogion*’s objective is ‘to prove that God exists, even, just as in the *Monologion*, to one unwilling to believe it’.²⁴ After all, Anselm wrote the *Proslogion* only because the *Monologion* appeared to him—not

²¹ Charlesworth, ‘Introduction’, p. 34.

²² See Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 1.

²³ In this connection, Stolz emphasized the prayerful genre and tone of the *Proslogion*: ‘The peculiar literary form of the *Proslogion* suggests this point. Anselm theologizes in prayer’ (Stolz, *Anselm’s Theology in the Proslogion*, p. 184).

²⁴ Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, pp. 113f.

without some irritation—as ‘composed of a chain of many arguments’.²⁵ In the case of both works, therefore, Anselm’s aim was to explore what he calls ‘ratio fidei’, which S. Visser and T. William plausibly see as ‘the intrinsically rational character of Christian doctrines in virtue of which they form a coherent and rationally defensible system’.²⁶

One more reason for dismissing the idea that there is inconsistency between the two works in question is that the above-mentioned ‘problem of Anselm’ can also emerge if we consider only the *Proslogion*. This is testified by the fact that believers have used this work for devotional purposes and at the same time—joined in this by unbelievers—have used it to investigate whether and how God’s existence can be proven.²⁷

The *Proslogion* alone, therefore, invites reflection on how to reconcile the role of faith, which the act of understanding presupposes, with that of understanding, which Anselm must have employed in support of faith and at the same time—provided that he formulates the *unum argumentum* for both believers and unbelievers—autonomously from faith. As D.S. Hogg says, ‘belief is the indispensable prerequisite for knowing God. This, it may be argued, is circular reasoning indeed! But, for Augustine and Anselm, how could it be otherwise? If we want to prove the existence of that than which nothing greater can be conceived we could only do so in so far as that being gave us insight.’²⁸

²⁵ ‘Multorum concatenatione contextum argumentorum’ (Anselm, *Proslogion*, Preface). This led Anselm to formulate the *unum argumentum*, which, since it is constituted by very few words, has ensured the success of the *Proslogion* over the centuries. (See D. S. Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology* (Aldershot—Burlington: Ashgate 2004), p. 89).

²⁶ S. Visser & T. Williams, *Anselm* (New York: Oxford University Press 2009), p. 14.

²⁷ See Ortlund, *Anselm's Pursuit of Joy*, p. 1.

²⁸ Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, p. 95. Various authors such as W. Rowe and R. Southern have argued that the UA is ‘question-begging’. See above, footnote 4.

The same author offers a reflection, which I believe may lead to possible solutions. While considering numerous criticisms against Anselm's thought, he asks himself 'to what degree those making such claims have tried to enter Anselm's context and ask their questions in the light of an agenda that stretches over a lifetime'.²⁹ He refers to 'an experience of the divine', which 'is what Anselm seeks so eagerly in the *Monologion* and so diligently in the *Proslogion*'.³⁰

In this connection, although he focuses only on the *Proslogion*, Ortlund claims that

The divine formula by which Anselm proves God's existence (Proslogion 2-4) is that same formula by which he ascends all the way up through his doctrine of God as the *summum bonum* of the human soul (Proslogion 5- 23) and then into his anticipation of the heavenly beatific vision (Proslogion 24-26).³¹

In other words, the UA reveals a strict connection between the rational investigation, which may also involve unbelievers, and the promotion of a spiritual experience in accordance with faith. For L. Schumacher, the UA 'is designed to help those with faith in God find God in all things', and consequently 'reconcile faith in God with reason by allowing faith to shape their outlook on whatever they happen to be thinking about'.³²

I agree that for Anselm, showing the intrinsically rational character of the Christian doctrine is first and foremost designed to help believers know and live in a way that is consistent with their faith.

This, however, does not solve the circular problem that I have mentioned above while referring to Hogg. The fact that a believer intends to reconcile faith with reason by finding God in all things

²⁹ Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, p. 1.

³⁰ Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, p. 6.

³¹ Ortlund, *Anselm's Pursuit of Joy*, p. 230.

³² L. Schumacher, 'The lost legacy of Anselm's argument. Re-thinking the purpose of proofs for the existence of God', in *Modern Theology*, 27 (2011), pp. 96 and 94.

does not do justice to the philosophical character of Anselm's natural theology, which Anselm himself claims is designed to convince unbelievers.³³ As K. Rogers says, Anselm employs 'one and the same argument' to achieve two aims: 'convert the unbeliever, and help the Christian attain intellectus'.³⁴

2 Faith as *orientation* for philosophy

It is now time to show that a reconciliation between faith and the philosophical inquiry in Anselm's natural theology can be achieved through a careful consideration of the meaning he ascribes to faith. I have already mentioned Hogg, who stated that the context in which Anselm lived and worked should be explored more attentively. More precisely, in his words 'the literary context in which Anselm was writing was so thoroughly infused with a particular model of reality and a way of interpreting sensible data in the light of revealed truth that we cannot afford to neglect it'.³⁵ While stressing the significance of faith in that context, I. Logan claims that 'Anselm was most definitely a

³³ For Williams, 'although the theistic proofs are borne of an active love of God seeking a deeper knowledge of the beloved, the proofs themselves are intended to be convincing even to unbelievers' (Williams, Thomas, "Saint Anselm", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries./anselm/>).

³⁴ K. Rogers, 'Can Christianity be proven? St. Anselm of Canterbury on Faith and Reason', in *Anselm Studies*, 2 (1988), p. 465. Let me mention another reading of the UA, according to which the UA is addressed 'to Jewish polemicists who had argued that the Christian conception of God as an instantiated unity was irrational'. (N. Kendrick, 'The non-Christian influence on Anselm's Proslogion argument', in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 69 (2011), p. 73).

³⁵ Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, p. 2.

member of a community of ideas, and when he could not understand what Catholic belief teaches about God he bowed his head in reverence, unlike those he called the “heretics of dialectic”³⁶.

Obviously enough, faith heavily shaped Anselm’s life and reflection, which is why it seems appropriate to wonder what meaning faith had for him. This may help to see how exactly, in his thought, it relates to philosophy.

Furthermore, focusing on the meaning of faith seems especially necessary if we consider that the readings of Anselm mentioned in the last section seem to have implicitly adopted a specific meaning of faith, which is the propositional content of divine revelation and the corresponding propositional belief. Faith, however, means not only that which one believes, which is traditionally referred to as *fides quae*; it also means *the way* in which one believes, which has traditionally been called *fides qua*. This distinction traces back to Augustine, and the same can be said of the tripartition on the basis of which faith means “believing in a God” (*credere Deum*), “believing God” (*credere Deo*), and “believing in God” (*credere in Deum*). The first of these three dimensions of faith takes God as an object of knowledge (*credere Deum*), thus defining the intellectual character of faith as an act of the intellect with its noetic contents (*fides quae*, which—as is known—must be distinguished from *fides qua*, the act of faith that is meant by the two other aspects). The second aspect (*credere Deo*) allows us to see that the act of faith depends on God, in the sense that there is no faith without divine revelation. The third aspect (*credere in Deum*) allows us to see that the object in question is also the ultimate goal—it is the good that should be looked for and not a mere truth or a person like any other. To put it another way, the first two aspects concern the propositional content of faith (the material object: *credere Deum*) and the way in which it is proposed to the believer (the formal object: *credere Deo*). The third aspect determines the proper

³⁶ I. Logan, *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion: The History of Anselm’s Argument and its Significance Today* (Farnham-Burlington: Ashgate 2009), p. 3.

task of the will, which, since it aims at the highest good, leads the intellect to give assent to the revealed truth.

Faith, therefore, cannot be taken only as mere propositional content and corresponding belief. It is also adhesion of the human will to God, which is due to the love for him that God himself grants to believers. Anselm refers to the adhesion in question as ‘living faith’ (*viva fides*), whereas the mere belief related to propositional content is ‘dead faith’ (*mortua fides*):

Living faith can quite suitably be said to believe in what ought to be believed in, whereas dead faith [can be said] merely to believe what ought to be believed.³⁷

If faith is also taken as adhesion to God and not only as propositional content, then two significant consequences follow.

First, Anselm’s natural theology can be caused and accompanied by faith and at the same time seen as a *philosophical* enterprise—as such it can be directed to unbelievers as well. In fact, unlike the propositional content of divine revelation, the act of the will that aims at achieving communion with God cannot replace the philosophical investigation. Of course, this does not mean that the propositional content of faith is no longer valid. Rather, unlike faith as adhesion to God, it does not take part in the development of rational arguments. In this connection, Logan says that ‘for Anselm, authority is not the source of argument and argumentation, it is extrinsic to dialectic.’³⁸

Second, if Anselm’s philosophical theology is accompanied by faith, then it is obviously a theological work. After all, it does not seem possible to say that faith, which for a believer like Anselm is expected to be a crucial experience that shapes his whole life, does not contribute to his

³⁷ ‘Satis itaque convenienter dici potest viva fides credere in id in quod credi debet, mortua vero fides credere tantum id quod credi debet.’ (Anselm, *Monologion*, 78).

³⁸ Logan, *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion*, p. 21.

intellectual experience. Anselm claims that, unlike the intellectual content of faith, the ‘living faith’ promotes commitment and action:

Therefore, with whatever degree of certainty so important a matter is believed, [this] faith will be useless and as something dead unless it is made alive and strong by love. Indeed, this faith, which its corresponding love accompanies, is not at all idle—provided the opportunity to use [it] arises. Rather, [this faith] exercises itself in a great number of works—something which it could not do in the absence of love. [These claims] can be proved by the solitary fact that what loves Supreme Justice can neither despise anything just nor admit of anything unjust.³⁹

This view seems to be confirmed by various authors. For Sweeney, by faith Anselm does not mean the presupposition of all or even some of the basic principles of Christian faith articulated in the creed (...) [H]e presupposes faith in the sense that faith entails an intense desire to know about the subjects he explores by reason.⁴⁰

Ortlund argues that Anselm’s attempt to reason *sola ratione* makes appeal to *fides qua* and not to *fides quae*:

³⁹ ‘Quapropter, quantacumque certitudine credatur tanta res: inutilis erit fides et quasi mortuum aliquid, nisi dilectione valeat et vivat. Etenim nullatenus fidem illam quam competens comitatur dilectio, si se opportunitas conferat operandi, otiosam esse sed magna se quadam operum exercere frequentia, quod sine dilectione facere non posset, vel hoc solo probari potest, quia quod summam iustitiam diligit, nihil iustum contemnere, nihil valet iniustum admittere.’ (Anselm, *Monologion*, 78).

⁴⁰ Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 122. This author adds that “‘believing in (*credere in*)” the supreme being, Anselm explains, includes both the notion of striving for and believing certain things. “Believing in” captures this sense of movement toward God better than “directing belief to (*credere ad*) God”, Anselm argues. The latter is too static and indirect while the former gives a sense of motion and also the intimacy envisioned as the goal, which is to go *in* to God rather than simply believe things about God from a distance’ (p. 145).

In a medieval context where florilegia were among the most common theological documents--and the citation of theological authorities (like Augustine and Scripture) was considered standard theological argumentation—*sola ratione* meant reason apart from theological authority, not reason apart from faith. What it excluded was not the approach of *fides qua* (the faith by which we believe) but an appeal to *fides quae* (the faith which is believed).⁴¹

Faith taken as adhesion to God due to love for God should *always* accompany the believer in whatever she does --including the various phases of intellectual activity. From this viewpoint, Anselm, as Williams points out, 'is not hoping to replace faith with understanding. Faith for Anselm is more a volitional state than an epistemic state: it is love for God and a drive to act as God wills.'⁴²

The adhesion of the will to God and its related commitment to live in accordance with the divine revelation causes the intention to confirm rationally what one already believes by faith.⁴³ This intention is what I call *orientation* of Anselm's rational enterprise. It constitutes the point of departure of Anselm's reflection, which he cultivates by relying on God's help:

Teach me to seek You, and reveal Yourself to me as I seek; for unless You teach [me] I cannot seek You, and unless You reveal Yourself I cannot find You. Let me seek You in

⁴¹ Ortlund, *Anselm's Pursuit of Joy*, pp. 14f.

⁴² Williams, 'Saint Anselm'. Williams, 'Saint Anselm'.

⁴³ At the beginning of *Cur Deus Homo?*, Anselm describes the aim of his intellectual activity as follows: 'To nourish those who, having hearts already cleansed by faith, delight in the rational basis of our faith—a rational basis for which we ought to hunger once [we have] the certainty of faith' (Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*, *Commendation of this work to Pope Urban II*).

desiring You; let me desire You in seeking You. Let me find [You] in loving [You]; let me love [You] in finding [You].⁴⁴

Also, this commitment to God makes one train one's emotions and promote one's spiritual and intellectual growth. M. McCord Adams maintains that the intellectual powers with which we have been endowed to pursue our *telos* have been damaged. In any event, she says, 'they need to be developed through extensive education'. She notes that, in Anselm's time, 'the monastery is a school of the Lord's service, enlisting recruits under the banner of obedience, training the will up to virtues'. From this follows that the monks train their emotions, as shown in Anselm's *Prayers and Meditations*, and improve the techniques of intellectual inquiry, as testified by Anselm's quartet of dialogues—*De Grammatico*, *De Veritate*, *De Libertate Arbitrii*, and *De Casu Diaboli*.⁴⁵

Needless to say, this commitment to God does not automatically follow from the intellectual adhesion to the Christian belief. Anselm addresses first and foremost himself, in the sense that the UA 'is no theoretical exercise for Anselm; it is intensely personal'.⁴⁶

In the next section, I intend to show that, taken as adhesion of the will to God and his revelation, faith is not only *orientation* to Anselm's rational research. It is also *criterion* for his intellectual activity. This means that faith does not stop playing a role once the philosophical investigation has attained its end. This would happen if faith were taken as propositional belief—from this viewpoint, in fact, faith should be replaced with philosophy. Faith as adhesion of the will, instead, orients the

⁴⁴ '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 quaerendo. Inveniam amando, amem inveniando.' (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1).

⁴⁵ M. McCord Adams, *Anselm on faith and reason* (1992), reprinted in Brian Davies & Brian Leftow (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004), from now on: Companion, p. 35.

⁴⁶ R. Campbell, *Rethinking Anselm's Arguments: A Vindication of His Proof of the Existence of God* (Leiden: Brill 2018), p. 405.

rational enterprise and, once philosophical understanding has been achieved, it continues to operate as a criterion for the successful outcomes of this understanding. This is the subject of the next section.

Before proceeding, however, an objection deserves consideration. I have argued so far that Anselm's natural theology is conducted under the influence of faith taken as adhesion of the will to divine revelation, and autonomously from faith taken as propositional belief. Natural theology, therefore, has a theological origin and implies a philosophical strategy, which is also aimed at convincing unbelievers. One may object, however, that this seems to be true only in regard to the *Monologion*. The *Proslogion*, instead, may be seen as including a Christian concept of God, as it has frequently been said. In this view, my argument that the strategy Anselm employs is a philosophical one should be rejected.

I can provide some answers. First, the philosophical strategy of the *Proslogion* is due to the fact that *the argumentation* conducted by Anselm does not include contents of faith. In other words, the revealed truths, believed by faith, are not employed *to justify* any statement that takes part *in the line of reasoning* that Anselm develops. In this connection, as Logan says, faith for Anselm is extrinsic to argumentation (see above, footnote 38). Second, not everyone believes that a philosophical strategy only starts from universally accepted beliefs. For McCord Adams, it is true that philosophers aim at proving religious theses by using sound arguments from premises *acceptable by all*. However, they also see 'whether adherence to such theses can be *rationally justified*'.⁴⁷ In other words, so the author seems to maintain, a philosophical strategy does not necessarily need to be grounded only on premises universally accepted. B. Davies and B. Leftow argue that

⁴⁷ McCord Adams, 'Anselm on faith and reason', p. 32.

for Anselm, what mattered was thinking well about matters of importance. So, even when he is discussing items of Christian doctrine (as opposed to what are clearly ‘philosophical topics’), he aims to draw on the best he can provide in the way of right thinking. In other words, Anselm’s theology is very much that of a philosopher (taking ‘philosopher’ to mean ‘someone concerned to argue for conclusions in a cogent way’).⁴⁸

True, the concept of philosophy that has been established in modern age fosters the impression that the philosopher should only follow ‘where reason leads’. As Davies says, once assumed this concept, philosophers ‘encourage us to suppose that they have no serious beliefs to start with, especially religious ones’.⁴⁹ This traces back to Descartes’s famous choice to start from a neutral view, i.e. to start any discussion anew from the beginning as if nothing were written before. On closer inspection, however, such a choice appears by no means to be neutral.⁵⁰ In other words, just denying the existence of prejudices, if not appropriately demonstrated, is contradictory. H.G. Gadamer has famously made this point by arguing that this would mean to be ‘prejudiced against prejudice’.⁵¹

3 Faith as *criterion* of philosophy

⁴⁸ Davies & Leftow, ‘Introduction’, in *Companion*, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Davies, ‘Anselm and the ontological argument’, in *Companion*, p. 157.

⁵⁰ On the contrary, it is due to an impressive host of arguments. See René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, in *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, tr. E. S. Haldane & G. R. T. Ross (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications 2003), Part I, p. 5).

⁵¹ H. G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2^o ed. tr. J. Weinsheimer & D. Marshall (London-New York: Continuum 1989), p. 273.

It is now time to show that, once faith is taken as adhesion of the will to divine revelation, it acts as a criterion of philosophy. This is implicit in what I have said in the previous section regarding the idea that faith is orientation of philosophy.

For Anselm, communion with God directs the intellectual research, as demonstrated by the fact that God is expected to answer the prayer of believers by showing them where and how to seek to find him.⁵² Thus the faithful are persuaded that reason, if it works in accordance with its nature, i.e.

God's plan, will not lead them to deny what they already believe by faith. In Anselm's time, as G.R. Evans points out, the ultimate objective of searching by reason alone was not 'to find in reasoning an alternative to the study of the Scripture; it was to bring the enquirer to the realization that when he had done his reasoning he would find that he arrived where faith would also take him'.⁵³ Anselm wanted to develop 'necessary reasons', but these reasons were not intended 'to be independent of, but consistent with, authority'.⁵⁴

Therefore, Anselm starts from the conviction that the necessary reasons he is looking for must be consistent with authority. Needless to say, this seems to imply that, in case of contradiction between that which is already believed by faith and the 'necessary reasons' in question, these reasons should be subjected to revision. In other words, the belief held by authority should work as a criterion for the outcomes of the rational activity.

Someone may object that the rational arguments contradict or confirm *the propositional content* of faith, not *the adhesion of the will* to God. How, therefore, to maintain my thesis that the faith from

⁵² 'Lord my God, teach my heart where and how to seek You, where and how to find You' (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1).

⁵³ G. R. Evans, 'Anselm's life, works, and immediate influence', in *Companion*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Logan, *Reading Anselm's Proslogion*, p. 22. This author appropriately insists on the crucial role that the idea that human reason is *imago Dei* plays in Anselm's reflection.

which believers start their inquiry is the adhesion of the will and not, as now seems to emerge, the propositional content of divine revelation?

To address this objection, it should be pointed out that the adhesion of the will would not be possible in the absence of intellectual contents. Those who love God and intend to put into practice his teaching obviously possess beliefs about him and his revelation. My thesis, therefore, is that the propositional content of divine revelation does not play any role in the rational investigation, not that *it is absent*. By contrast, the adhesion to God, the love for him, and the wish to confirm by reason what is already believed by faith always accompanies the intellectual research, of which it is orientation and criterion.

Logan seems to confirm this view, especially the idea that faith is criterion for philosophy. In matters of faith, so Logan says, Anselm believes that authority provides ‘the rule against which results of the dialectic examination of the relation of subjects and predicates should be measured’. In other words, ‘confirmation is required from a greater authority before the outcome of his rational proof is to be accepted’.⁵⁵ Logan refers to *Monologion*, 1, where Anselm writes:

if in this [investigation] I say something that a greater authority does not teach, I want it to be accepted in such way that even if it is a necessary consequence of reasons which will seem [good] to me, it is not thereby said to be absolutely necessary, but is said only to be able to appear necessary for the time being.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Logan, *Reading Anselm's Proslogion*, pp. 21f.

⁵⁶ ‘Si quid dixero quod maior non monstret auctoritas: sic volo accipi ut, quamvis ex rationibus quae mihi videbuntur, quasi necessarium concludatur, non ob hoc tamen omnino necessarium, sed tantum sic interim videri posse dicatur’ (Anselm, *Monologion*, 1).

Anselm, therefore, refers to a *quasi* or *interim* necessity, which remains ‘provisional until support is provided by a greater authority’.⁵⁷ As Visser and Williams point out while citing Anselm’s *De Concordia*,

Anselm believes that “Holy Scripture contains the authority of every conclusion of reason” and “gives aid to no falsehood”; consequently, he is confident that if his rational arguments go astray in some way, Scripture will provide the materials to correct them.⁵⁸

A passage contained in *Cur Deus Homo?* may seem to contradict the thesis that Anselm sees faith as criterion for philosophy.⁵⁹ Referring to someone who wants to deny that salvation occurs through Christ, Anselm asks himself:

What answer ought to be given to someone who affirms of what must occur that it cannot occur—his reason being simply that he does not know how it occurs?⁶⁰

On closer inspection, however, this passage does not seem to parallel the one contained in the *Monologion*, which regards the relationship between what the believer is expected to firmly believe and the outcomes of his or her rational investigation. In the passage that Logan cites from *Cur Deus Homo?*, Anselm plausibly reproaches the person who ascribes impossibility to something deduced by means of necessary reasons (‘astruit esse impossibile quod necesse est esse’), namely, man’s salvation can occur through Christ. She claims *with certainty* that this *cannot* be true, though it is supported by *necessary* reasons. And this is obviously implausible, also because her attitude is due to the fact that she *does not understand* (‘nescit quomodo sit’) the necessary reasons in question, not

⁵⁷ Logan, *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion*, p. 22.

⁵⁸ Visser & Williams, *Anselm*, p. 17. The two passages they cite are from *De Concordia*, III, 6.

⁵⁹ It is Logan who takes into account this passage in *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion*, p. 22.

⁶⁰ ‘Quid respondendum est illi, qui idcirco astruit esse impossibile quod necesse est esse, quia nescit, quomodo sit?’ (Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*, I, 25).

to mention the fact that her thesis, with which she opposes such reasons, is that she ‘wants to claim’ (‘asserere velit’) that the salvation at stake cannot occur.

This is different from the situation that I have considered so far. The believer whose rational conclusions contradict her religious stance considers them *provisional*, not *impossible*. Furthermore, she may *fully understand* the conclusions in question. In fact, she considers them provisional because they contradict her religious stance, and not because she does not understand them. Finally, her behavior is due to her reliance *on the authority of the Scripture*, and *not on her own will*. From an epistemological point of view, especially in Anselm’s time, the former is a plausible reason, whereas the latter is not.

I can therefore conclude that Anselm considers faith as a sort of orientation for philosophy, in the sense that the philosophical activity is expected to confirm what the faithful already believe. From this follows that the outcomes of such activity, however necessary they may seem to be, are plausibly expected to be looked upon as *provisional* until their adherence to faith is confirmed.

In addition to the historical context, let me note that this view belongs to the Christian tradition, as shown by Aquinas. Aquinas openly claims that any arguments contrasting with the truth of Christian revelation must be rejected, even if they seem --at least at first sight--to be rationally convincing. Unlike Anselm, he also argues that once such arguments have been rejected—because of their opposition to faith—reason must start anew from the beginning and from its own principles.⁶¹

Also, Aquinas shows a noteworthy *trust* in the power of reason to attain the truth. For him reason--in spite of the mistakes it might have made--is supposed to recommence its work. Worthy of notice is the fact that the trust in question does not seem to be due strictly to reason. It would seem to be

⁶¹ See Aquinas, *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 2, a. 3.

based, instead, on two principles, which Aquinas openly formulates at the beginning of his *Summa theologiae*.⁶² According to one of them, ‘faith rests upon infallible truth’, which is obviously a truth of faith. According to the other, it is impossible to demonstrate what negates the truths of faith—this is proposed by Aquinas neither as a demonstration nor as an intuition.

Thus, the trust in reason as it emerges from Aquinas’s work, is due to faith, which in this way constitutes a sort of *promotion* of research in all possible directions. This accounts for the conviction that faith seems to create the best possible conditions for intellectual activity.⁶³ In this regard, Anselm may be seen as a thinker who has paved the way to such a view, as I intend to argue in the next section.

4 Faith as promotion of philosophy

For Anselm, as McCord Adams notes,

all creatures are imperfect *likeness* of God, so that His glory can be (whether explicitly or implicitly) esteemed in all his works. Likewise, all creatures are Gods’ handiwork, a studied appreciation of them, a (witting and unwitting) swelling of their Maker’s praise.⁶⁴

If all creatures of God reveal his glory, this can (especially) be said of human beings, including their intellectual activity. This may explain why, as Sweeney notes, Anselm’s ‘faith in reason and in the power of words and arguments is seemingly boundless’.⁶⁵

⁶² See Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 8.

⁶³ This is what I argue in R. Di Ceglie, ‘Faith, reason, and charity in Thomas Aquinas’s Thought’, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 79 (2016), pp. 141ff. See also R. Di Ceglie, *Aquinas on Faith, Reason, and Charity* (New York: Routledge, 2022), Chapter 7.

⁶⁴ McCord Adams, ‘Anselm on faith and reason’, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 1.

Furthermore, if this trust in reason, as I have said in the last section apropos of Aquinas, is grounded in faith, Anselm by no means perceives it as *hubristic*. Visser and Williams make it clear that

Anselm's unusually high estimate of the power of human reason ultimately derives not from his confidence in human beings, but from his confidence in God—from his conviction that God, who is supreme wisdom and exercises supreme reason in everything he does, has made human beings rational by nature.⁶⁶

Being rational by nature, however, is not enough. As a Christian, Anselm believes that human nature, which is affected by sin, needs to be restored, which is only possible by having faith in God:

O Lord, I acknowledge and give thanks that You created in me Your image so that I may remember, contemplate, and love You. But [this image] has been so effaced by the abrasion of transgressions, so hidden from sight by the dark billows of sins, that unless You renew and refashion it, it cannot do what it was created to do.⁶⁷

Communion with God, therefore, puts us in the condition to employ our intellectual faculties to the best of our abilities. Anselm starts his *Proslogion* by asking God to raise and straighten him, otherwise he can only look downwards: ‘O Lord, bent over [as I am] I can look only downwards; straighten me so that I can look upwards.’⁶⁸ At the end of the work, instead, he invites his soul,

⁶⁶ Visser & Williams, *Anselm*, p. 17.

⁶⁷ ‘Fateor, domine, et gratias ago, quia creasti in me hanc imaginem tuam, ut tui memor te cogitem, te amem. Sed sic est abolita attritione vitiorum, sic est offuscata fumo peccatorum, ut non possit facere ad quod facta est, nisi tu renoves et reformes eam.’ (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1).

⁶⁸ ‘Domine, incurvatus non possum nisi deorsum aspicere, erige me ut possim sursum intendere’ (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 1).

which has completed the knowing process, to look upwards: ‘Now, my soul, arouse and elevate your whole understanding; ponder as best you can what kind of good this is and how great it is.’⁶⁹

Anselm also describes how communion with God facilitates and promotes rational activity. He focuses on three aspects of faith that provide the best possible condition to avoid mistakes: humility, obedience, and spiritual discipline.⁷⁰ Humility makes the faithful aware of their limits and prevents them from obstinately sticking to their views.⁷¹ Obedience helps them to adhere to the teaching of the Church and prevents them from moving away from it. Spiritual discipline leads them to ignore such goods as success and money. Instead, it leads them to search for the good in itself, which in turn causes them to reject any immediate interest that could spoil the search for truth—such as excessive confidence in one’s capabilities, disrespect for the opinions of others, rushing to conclusions, and so on.

Thus, faith seems to put the believer in the best possible condition to conduct the intellectual activity. If this activity is due to the rational character of humans, which God has given to them, and is conducted in accordance with its own nature, i.e. God’s plan, then the powers of its arguments are boundless, as highlighted by Sweeney in the passage I cited above (see footnote 65).

This seems to be shown by Anselm’s persistent commitment to finding the UA:

I often and eagerly directed my thinking to this [goal]. At times what I was in quest of seemed to me to be apprehensible; at times it completely eluded the acute gaze of my mind.

⁶⁹ ‘Excita nunc, anima mea, et erige totum intellectum tuum, et cogita quantum potes, quale et quantum sit illud bonum’ (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 24).

⁷⁰ Here I partly follow Visser & Williams, *Anselm*, pp. 20f.

⁷¹ This does not contradict the firm belief that the faithful are expected to hold even when contrary and ‘necessary reasons’, which I mentioned above (see footnotes 57ff.), emerge. The views I refer here are the ones that, because of sin, we sometimes tend to mistake for God’s word, and that communion with God should help us avoid. Obedience, too, contributes to avoid this mistake.

At last, despairing, I wanted to desist, as though from pursuit of a thing which was not possible to be found. But just when I wanted completely to exclude from myself this thinking—lest by occupying my mind in vain, it would keep [me] from other [projects] in which I could make headway—just then it began more and more to force itself insistently upon me, unwilling and resisting [as I was].⁷²

Anselm employed his intellectual faculties in a new direction, though he didn't think of himself as an *innovator*. The same can be said with regard to the *Monologion*. Lanfranc, to whom Anselm had submitted this work for approval, was not happy with the fact that in the *Monologion* the author did not appeal to the authority of the Scriptures. We may see Lanfranc's view as revealing the idea that faith taken as propositional content must accompany any research. By contrast, Anselm replied that he did not need to make use of quotations from the Scriptures to be in line with the Christian doctrine.⁷³ If faith is taken as adhesion of the will to God and his revelation, and not propositional belief, the presence of faith is not explicitly seen in the intellectual activity conducted by believers.

Faith, therefore, leads Anselm to open new paths for research. Precisely because of his adherence to faith, 'he is aware of the dangers of dialectic, but does not see these as inherent in dialectic'.⁷⁴

⁷² 'Ad quod cum saepe studioseque cogitationem converterem, atque aliquando mihi videretur iam posse capi quod quaerebam, aliquando mentis aciem omnino fugeret: tandem desperans volui cessare velut ab inquisitione rei quam inveniri esset impossibile. Sed cum illam cogitationem, ne mentem meam frustra occupando ab allis in quibus proficere possem impediret, penitus a me vellem excludere: tunc magis ac magis nolenti et defendenti se coepit cum importunitate quadam ingerere.' (Anselm, *Proslogion*, Preface).

⁷³ As Visser and Williams say, 'we do not have the text of Lanfranc's assessment, but we do know that he took a dim view of Anselm's avoidance of Scriptural authority. ... Anselm's reply to Lanfranc is very telling. He assured his former superior that the *Monologion* contained nothing that could not be found in Scripture or in Augustine. But he made no changes to the *Monologion* itself, and he never submitted another work for Lanfranc's approval. He was unwavering in his conviction that it is legitimate for the Christian to explore the reason of faith without reliance on authority.' (Visser & Williams, *Anselm*, p. 17).

⁷⁴ Logan, *Reading Anselm's Proslogion*, p. 20.

Consequently, he does not fear to appear to resemble the pagan philosophers' way of reasoning. As I have already said, the words employed to formulate the UA are the same used by Seneca in a work that Anselm possibly had access to. Also of great interest is the resemblance between, on the one hand, the way Anselm refutes the fool and, on the other, the way Aristotle had famously refuted, in *Metaphysics IV*, those who wanted to reject the principle of non-contradiction. Anselm says that the fool can only *utter* that which s/he *cannot think*.⁷⁵ Both authors, therefore, reduce the counterpart to silence.⁷⁶

As I have already said, in Anselm's time this was a new approach to philosophical theology. Anselm made considerable efforts to open this new path for research, which led to misunderstandings--such as Lanfranc's--as well as violent attacks.⁷⁷

However, Anselm's 'boundless' faith in reason led him to make these efforts. He believed that our rational faculties, if employed in accordance with their nature, cannot contradict what--as believer--he mostly cared about, i.e. his religious faith. Consequently, he must have felt encouraged to employ reason in any possible direction.

Needless to say, this is the best possible condition in which to conduct rational investigations. If one firmly believes--no matter whether he or she is right or not-- that intellectual activity can only confirm what one loves and mostly cares about, then one is ready to develop one's arguments

⁷⁵ 'Indeed, no one who understands that which God is can think that God does not exist, even though he says these words' (Anselm, *Proslogion*, 4).

⁷⁶ In this connection, A.D. Smith points out that 'Anselm did take himself to have provided a cogent proof of God's existence' (A. D. Smith, *Anselm's Other Argument* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press 2014), p. 11).

⁷⁷ I refer to Eadmer's account that someone at Bec destroyed early drafts of the *Proslogion* (see Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, 1.19). G. E.M. Gasper sees these events as caused by various reasons such as political opposition, intellectual divergence, and personal envy. See his 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy: Anselm of Canterbury and the Genesis of the *Proslogion*', in *Viator*, 41 (2010), pp. 45-68.

wherever reason leads. Ironically enough, this has traditionally been considered the most typical characteristic of the philosophical activity.

I can therefore conclude that the theological origins of his intellectual inquiry led Anselm to act as a real philosopher. As Sweeney points out, the goal of his research ‘is complete intimacy with God and others’, and at the same time ‘complete certainty and indubitability in his conclusions’.⁷⁸

Conclusion

In this essay I have argued that incompatibility between faith and reason in Anselm’s natural theology--with consequent attempts by his interpreters to see one of them as prevailing over the other--emerges only to the extent that faith is taken as the propositional content of divine revelation and the corresponding propositional belief. Indeed, if proofs are sufficient for one to know, faith disappears. On the contrary, if proofs are not sufficient, faith is present whereas philosophical understanding is not.

Instead, if faith is taken as the adhesion of will to God, which God himself grants to believers, then faith can coexist with philosophical activity, and act as orientation, criterion, and promotion of philosophical theology.

Not only does this help to explain the meaning of Anselm’s expression ‘faith seeks understanding’ (it wouldn’t make sense to say that the propositional belief in the divine revelation seeks evidence in its own support. Once this evidence is found, in fact, such a belief will be replaced by knowledge.) It also shows that, since the faithful believe that God himself granted them the adhesion in question, they should feel sure that rational outcomes cannot end up contradicting what

⁷⁸ Sweeney, *Anselm of Canterbury and the desire for the word*, p. 8.

as believers they mostly care about, i.e., divine revelation. As a consequence, they also feel encouraged to employ their reason in any possible direction. This is what Anselm does in both the *Monologion*, where he does not appeal to the authority of Scripture, and the *Proslogion*, where he endeavors to find a new argument in support of God's existence. In this way, it can be explained that, against what is often believed, it is precisely the theological origins of Anselm's proofs for God's existence that--especially in the *Proslogion*--led Anselm to create the best possible condition to develop a rigorous and original philosophical inquiry.

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