

# RETURNING BARTH TO ANSELM

---

TIMOTHY STANLEY

## *Barth's Anselm*

In the preface to the first edition of Karl Barth's *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, he observes that his newly inspired interest in Anselm was shaped by a guest lecture given by his "philosopher friend Heinrich Scholz of Münster on the Proof of God's Existence in Anselm's *Proslogion*."<sup>1</sup> Barth acknowledges that it was this lecture which "produced within me a compelling urge to deal with Anselm quite differently from hitherto, to deal directly with the problematical Anselm, the Anselm of *Proslogion* 2-4."<sup>2</sup> Barth is aware therefore, that what he writes in 1930 has moved on from his 1926 lectures on Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, which he delivered in the summer semester as a professor in Münster,<sup>3</sup> and he cites the latter half of his book on Anselm, the specific exegesis of *Proslogion* 2-4, as the locus of that difference.<sup>4</sup> It is these prefatory remarks that will echo throughout his later consistent citations of Anselm as a turning point in his thought.<sup>5</sup>

Barth divides his book on Anselm into two parts. The first part covers the context of Anselm's theological scheme or method, i.e. "the general context of his 'proving.'"<sup>6</sup> The primary challenge Barth faces in this first section is to interpret what Anselm means by proof. Barth here attempts to extricate Anselm's understanding of proof from Aquinas's and Kant's critiques of it, not to mention the engagements with Anselm contemporary to Barth's own theology by the likes of F. Christian Baur and J. Bainvel.<sup>7</sup> This context however, provides the gateway to the second half of the book, where Barth explicates Anselm's *Proslogion* 2-4 in greater detail. When scholars assess Barth's 1930 book on Anselm we might assume that they would pay close attention to the exegesis of Anselm's proof in the latter part of the work, given that Barth cites this part of the book as the impetus for his return to and reassessment of Anselm in the early 1930s. In fact, however, the second half

---

Timothy Stanley  
Linton House, Flat 6, 2A Wellington Road, Manchester M14 6EQ, UK  
Timothy.stanley@manchester.ac.uk

of Barth's Anselm book has been consistently overlooked. This oversight can best be explained by a notable passage in the preface to the second edition, where Barth commends Hans Urs von Balthasar for the latter's recognition of how the Anselm book provides a "vital key" to Barth's theology.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, Balthasar's interpretation hinges on a shift he detects in Barth from a dialectical to an analogical way or method of doing theology.<sup>9</sup> As a result of this prefatory remark, scholarly debate concerning just what was significant about Anselm for Barth has often emphasized the introductory, first section of the book, which delineates the context of Anselm's method, and not the 'exegesis' of the general and special existence of God according to Anselm that Barth develops in the second part.

For instance, Jeffrey Pugh's *The Anselmic Shift* focuses upon Barth's introductory description of his approach to Anselm.<sup>10</sup> Pugh stands at the heart of the agreement with other commentators who also mark Anselm as a significant turning point in Barth's approach to the theological task.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, however, he rehearses the preoccupation with the assumed shift from dialectic to analogy, which is thought to have taken place at this point in Barth's theological development, and does not give significant attention to the structure of the ontological relations Barth develops in the latter half of the book. Bruce McCormack, one of the more recent and influential commentators on Barth's theological development, follows suit in concentrating on the first section of Barth's Anselm book. In his case, however, he does so in order to refute the emphasis upon an analogical shift that Balthasar argued can be located there.<sup>12</sup> In so doing, McCormack gives the impression that there is no significant difference between Barth's 1926 and 1930 lectures and thus de-emphasizes the significance of Anselm in Barth's development.<sup>13</sup> Although we will address McCormack's justifications for contradicting Barth's own self-assessment of his book on Anselm in our conclusions below, the question we are raising at the outset here is whether or not a more thorough engagement with Barth's exegesis of *Proslogion* 2-4 might give crucial insight into the onto-theological nature of the "vital key" he referred to in his preface.

### *Presuppositions*

Although the first part of Barth's book on Anselm does provide an insightful context for Anselm's theology overall, Barth in fact will explain the significance of this context more clearly in the presuppositions to the second half of his book on the *Proslogion* itself. Firstly, Barth clarifies the revealed name Anselm uses to designate God in *Proslogion* 2: "*aliquid quo nihil cogitari potest.*"<sup>14</sup> "In German this expression can be paraphrased: 'Etwas über dem ein Grösseres nicht gedacht werden kann'. (Something beyond which nothing greater can be conceived.)"<sup>15</sup> The initial translation serves to orient the reader to the nature of the text itself as well as pointing to its unique function in

Anselm's argument. As Barth will say, "we are dealing with a concept of strict noetic content which Anselm describes here as a concept of God. It does not say that God is, nor what he is, but rather, in the form of a prohibition that man can understand, who he is."<sup>16</sup> Anselm's name for God is in this sense a negative statement. It outlines the conditions and parameters any true positive statement of God's existence will have to follow. In other words, it depends upon a second assumption: "the prior 'givenness' (credible on other grounds) of the thought of the *Existenz* of the essence [*Wesen*] of God which with his help is to be raised to knowledge and proof."<sup>17</sup> The name of God therefore provides the rule by which we might speak of the unique existence of God and come to demonstrate God's existence along the lines of Anselm's *Proslogion*.

It bears noting at this point what Barth developed previously in the first part of the book and the way commentators have tended to focus upon the more complicated and nuanced notion of *ratio* as Anselm understands it. "What does *ratio* mean in Anselm?"<sup>18</sup> By asking this question, Barth is in essence asking about the nature of "the knowing *ratio* peculiar to man,"<sup>19</sup> and the way in which Anselm applies *ratio* to both the knower and known objects. Here Barth distinguishes between the ontic *ratio* and the noetic *ratio*, with the former referring to the known and the latter to the knower. But Barth discerns here a peculiar use of *ratio* unique to faith and it is in this sense that the notion of *ratio* becomes important to Barth. For Barth, Anselm goes beyond human knowledge when he speaks "of the *ratio fidei* or of the *ratio* of the words and acts of God, of the *ratio* of their possibility and necessity."<sup>20</sup> It is in relation to this *ratio fidei*, that Barth interrelates the ontic and noetic *ratios*. Hence,

if an ontic *ratio* were to be proved by means of the knowing *ratio* of the human faculty of making concepts and judgments, after the object of faith is given by revelation, then this conception would not be correctly interpreted until we take into account that Anselm recognizes a third and ultimate *ratio*, a *ratio veritatis*.<sup>21</sup>

Truth itself therefore, is described here in terms of its inherent rationality. What we must not miss, however, is Barth's emphasis upon the way the object of faith becomes given in revelation as an *ontic ratio* in such a way that its proper interpretation is secured by a *ratio veritatis*. The object of faith is being discussed here after it has been revealed, and it therefore assumes a differentiation between the existence of God as an object for our thinking and God's existence which is properly attributable to God in and for himself. In other words, what must not be missed at this point in Barth's argument is the way in which God is being discussed in terms of the *ratio veritatis*.<sup>22</sup> As Barth goes on to say, "it is not because it is *ratio* that it has truth but because God, Truth, has it."<sup>23</sup> Thus all *rationes* are relative to God himself.<sup>24</sup>

Barth had, as has been noted by Eberhard Busch and others, already developed early on in the 1920s the possibility that the radical otherness of God could be articulated as a constitutive reality—e.g. Barth’s enigmatic proclamation “God is God.”<sup>25</sup> What Barth is establishing here in his Anselm book in the early 1930s, however, is the *difference* between the existence of God himself and the way in which God becomes known according to the ontic and noetic *rationes*. If we were to say, as McCormack does, that “ontic *ratio* stands at the beginning and at the end of the *intellectus fidei*. It is that which is sought, but it is also that which gives rise to the search in the first place,”<sup>26</sup> then we must also emphasize that Barth has left open at this point in the first half of his book on Anselm’s context, the existence of the Truth which stands beyond all knowing. Although Anselm believes that the *ratio fidei* is identical with the *ratio veritatis*, Barth is quick to add that “even here decision enters into it, not as to whether it is *ratio veritatis* but whether it can be recognized as such.”<sup>27</sup> It is this *recognition* of the *ratio veritatis* in the ontic *ratio* of the object of faith that Barth is focusing upon in the first section of his book on Anselm. He is not trying to finalize the ontological nature of the Truth, but rather to bracket the ontological nature of that Truth and to demonstrate the need to explicate further its unique existence, an existence which is not identical with the ontic *ratio* itself.

As we return from Barth’s presuppositions to his actual exegesis of Anselm’s *Proslogion*, we note how Barth deals more specifically with the importance of the distinction between ontic and noetic *rationes* by the way he develops Gaunilo’s critique of Anselm’s name for God. Gaunilo maintains that the name of God is in itself a blinding symbol that cannot provide the “truth in relation to God. Whether it be the word *Deus* or Anselm’s formula—the word itself could not provide him with a knowledge of God unless some extension of what the word is meant to denote were also given to him from another source.”<sup>28</sup> Barth’s contention here is that Gaunilo has misunderstood the noetic nature of Anselm’s name for God. Of course, Anselm himself would agree that God remains hidden in the ontic objectification of God and that God is always incomprehensible. What Anselm has done with his particular name of God, however, is firstly to lay “down a rule of thought which, if we follow it, enables us to endorse the statements about the essence [*Wesen*] of God accepted in faith (example, the statement of his incomprehensibility) as our own necessary thoughts.”<sup>29</sup> This is why it is so important to Barth that we begin with the noetic nature of Anselm’s name before moving on to its ontic objectification. For only by honoring this distinction can we see—as Barth did—that Anselm’s name for God is not an attempt to produce knowledge of God out of a vacuum, but rather the positing of a statement to be used as an axiom, a guiding rule of thought from which the argument for the existence of God could properly follow.<sup>30</sup>

In delimiting Anselm’s *aliquid quo nihil cogitari possit* as a rule for knowing God, Barth is explicitly demonstrating the need for that something greater

than what can be conceived. It is in this sense that Barth interprets Anselm's procedure for attributing existence to God and this brings us to the second introductory clarification Barth will make in the presuppositions prior to delving into the *Proslogion* itself. Here he will justify his interpretation of Anselm's use of *esse* in the *Proslogion* in terms of "*existere* or *subsistere*."<sup>31</sup> By interpreting *esse* in terms of *existere*, Barth means to emphasize the way the recognition of that than which nothing greater can be conceived demands a notion of existence *over against* thought. In explaining this relationship, Barth will explicate Gaunilo and Anselm's discussion of how a painter creates a work of art. The painter thinks of what he will paint and then paints it into existence. By applying this analogy to Anselm, Gaunilo presumes that he has discredited Anselm's argument because Anselm makes the move from the mind to reality without qualifying how the exterior reality is established.<sup>32</sup> In response, Anselm contends that what Gaunilo overlooks is that there is more going on in his proof than mere painter and painted. What Anselm attributes to the mind is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. If anyone therefore presumes that they have thought of that than which nothing greater can be conceived, they will have to admit that its existence goes beyond their cognition.<sup>33</sup> The structure of Anselm's name for God precludes any reduction to the mind alone. We do not presume that the painter could dream up a unicorn and then—because she succeeds in painting a unicorn—that the existence of unicorns necessarily follows. Rather, the thought and the object of thought have to correspond to a third form of existence, and here Barth argues that Anselm's name of God corresponds to a special mode of "thought, and if known and proved then it has to be specially known and proved."<sup>34</sup> This special mode of thought and proving presumes, therefore, a special mode of questioning which asks not just what is *thought*, but *what* is thought.<sup>35</sup>

Here we must engage a longer citation where Barth deepens his discussion of the painter and painting in terms of three circles, the effect of which is to demonstrate further what this special proving entails.

It asks whether and to what extent this object [*Gegenstand*], as surely as it is the object of thought [*Gegenstand des Denkens*], at the same time stands over against [*entgegensteht*] thought [*Gedacht*] and is itself not to be reduced [*aufzulösen*] to something that is merely thought [*bloßes Gedachtes*]; it asks whether and to what extent, while belonging to the inner circle of what is thought [*Gedachten*], it also 'protrudes' [*heraustritt*] into the outer circle of what is not only thought [*Nichtnurgedachten*], but exists independently of thought [*dem Denken gegenüber selbständig Seinden*]. For Anselm, on this *ex-sistere* of the object [*Gegenstandes*] depends nothing less than its true-being [*Wahrsein*]. Its being in truth [*Das Sein in der Wahrheit*] is for Anselm, as it were, the third and last outer circle by which the existence [*Dasein*] and within the existence [*Daseins*],

the existence in thought [*Gedachtsein*], must be enclosed if a thought [*Gedachtsein*] . . .<sup>36</sup> is to be true [*wahr sein soll*]. The object [*Gegenstand*] then is first of all in truth [*Wahrheit*], then following from that it exists [*ist er da*], then as a consequence of that it can be thought [*gedacht sein*]. Without the middle step of existing [*Daseins*] what is thought [*Gedacht*] could not truly be [*nicht wahr sein*].<sup>37</sup>

Because of the way in which God is named as that than which nothing greater can be conceived, the noetic character of that name demands an ontic referent that can be apprehended only as that greater beyond even itself. Barth consistently refers to this ontic referent in terms of *Dasein*, *ist da*, etc. But this greater object cannot subsist as an ontic objectification. Rather it only is [*ist da*] in relation to the necessity of the thought [*Gedacht*] of that than which nothing greater can be conceived. If this were not the case, then Gaunilo would be right and the artist's creation would never fully extricate itself from the artist's mind. Barth therefore differentiates the objective being [*Dasein*] of the object of thought from its true being [*Wahrsein*] which is presumed beyond the ontic objectification. It is here, precisely in the distance and relation between the ontic object and its true being, that Barth will establish his proof for the unique existence of God in his exegesis of *Proslogion 2-4*.

Barth takes the time, when discussing his presuppositions, to orient his readers to the ontological language games that he will be playing throughout his exegesis of the *Proslogion*. As he will say in one of the more concise examples of those games, "*Existenz* means in general the *Dasein* of an object [*Gegenstandes*] without regard to whether it is thought of as existing [*daseiend*]."<sup>38</sup> This brief statement sums up the basic contours of Barth's interpretation of Anselm's proof. Hence, when discussing the general *Existenz* of God in relation to *Proslogion 2*, Barth will invariably use the term *Dasein* in every translation of Anselm's argument in order to emphasize existence over against thought. When he turns to the specific *Existenz* unique to God in *Proslogion 3*, he will switch and use *nicht-daseiend* to indicate the negative prohibition against attributing the general concept of existence [*Existenz*] to God without qualifying it as the *Dasein* which is impossible not to be [*nicht-dasiend*]. Needless to say, these language games are wholly lost in the English translations and this no doubt has contributed to the oversight of the importance of what Barth is doing in the second half of his book on Anselm.

### *Proslogion 2-4*

Given what we have already outlined in the ontological differentiations that make up the heart of Barth's presuppositions to Anselm's *Proslogion 2-4*, our goal here is simply to demonstrate the way these presuppositions work themselves out more explicitly in his exegesis of these key passages in Anselm's texts. It is in this light that we must pay close attention to Barth's

use of language in his translation of *Proslogion* 2, the first part of which Barth gives as follows: “*quod vere sit Deus* (I 101, 2) That God truly exists [*Daß Gott in Wahrheit da sei*].”<sup>39</sup> Barth’s interest is in the true existence of God, and more specifically how Anselm’s proof delineates the pattern to arrive at it. To begin with, Barth will again point out that Anselm’s use of *esse* must in fact mean *existere*, which correlates with Barth’s use of *Dasein*, both of which signify a kind of determinate or objective being that clarifies the general concept of existence [*Existenz*] in relation to the thought alone. In order to explain more precisely why this must be so, Barth will comment on Anselm’s use of *vere*, which outlines his approach to the general (*Prosl* 2) and special (*Prosl* 3) proofs for God’s existence more specifically.

In reference to *Proslogion* 2, Barth says,

God does not exist [*ist da*] only in thought [*Denken*] but over against thought [*Denken gegenüber*]. Just because he exists [*da ist*] not only ‘inwardly’ but also ‘outwardly’ (*in intellectu et in re*), he (from the human standpoint) ‘truly’ exists [*ist*], exists [*ist da*] from the side of truth [*Wahrheit*] and therefore really [*wirklich*].<sup>40</sup>

Here, Barth explicitly draws attention to the relation between an inward and outward existence from the human standpoint. It is this inner and outer aspect of *Dasein* which Barth will demonstrate in his explication of *Proslogion* 2, and this will also lay the heuristic pattern that the rest of the proof will follow. Hence, Barth will then go on to explain the way in which this general understanding of *Dasein* opens up a proper assessment of *Proslogion* 3, which will explore the special manner in which we can attribute existence [*Existenz*] to God, and God alone, as an existence [*Dasein*] which is uniquely different from all other existents.<sup>41</sup> The two proofs are therefore deeply dependent upon each other.

In Barth’s view, the goal of *Proslogion* 2 is to explicate the *general* sense of existence which Anselm’s name for God—“something beyond which nothing greater can be conceived”—implies.<sup>42</sup> As Barth points out, this name “conceals no declaration about the essence [*Wesen*] of God and still less about God’s *Existenz*. The formula simply repeats the injunction inculcated on the believer’s thinking.”<sup>43</sup> Barth here is using *Existenz* in order to explain the problem with presuming an uncritical conception of existence upon Anselm’s proof. Barth’s prohibition is therefore not against the attribution of existence to God, but rather his concern is with attributing existence to God in a way that does not take account of the manner which Anselm’s name for God dictates. This is a relation Barth will attempt to clarify with his use of *Dasein* and Anselm’s *existit*. It should be noted at this point that the German *Existenz* is derived from the Latin *existentia*, which “is the existence of something in contrast to its *essentia* or nature.”<sup>44</sup> In Barth’s interpretation of Anselm’s *Proslogion*, however, he gives the impression that *Existenz* has lost this differentiation from essence, and Barth will seek to recover the peculiar

character of *existentia* by developing the meaning of *Dasein*. For Barth it is only by providing a proper account of how *Dasein* is attributable to God that a proper understanding of how God is related to the general concept of *Existenz* can follow.

No more apparent is the need for this differentiation between *Dasein* and *Existenz* in *Proslogion 2* than in Barth's discussion of the fool's ability to deny the *Existenz* of God. The fool's denial of God will be referred to again more fully in Barth's explication of *Proslogion 4*, but at this point he simply wants to expose and refute the fool's mistake and demonstrate the basis upon which *Proslogion 4* can stand. Anselm's discussion of the fool is really an inquiry into whether the object of Anselm's name for God is in fact firstly a true object. Barth's task is therefore to clarify what Anselm's approach means for the concept of *Existenz* as "the inconceivable existence [*transmentalen Existenz*] of God."<sup>45</sup> It is the believer's different attitude towards this trans-mental *Existenz* that determines his or her understanding of its relation to whatever we mean when we apply the general concept of *Existenz* to existing things. It is only as the believer accepts the need that he or she has to know the inconceivable God as that than which nothing greater can be conceived that these "two different modes of human existence [*Existenzweisen*]"<sup>46</sup> become available for reflection. The problem of how the *insipiens* is able to say what Anselm deems impossible to say is therefore resolved through this differentiation. Barth responds to the fool's ability to say in his heart that there is no God by demonstrating the unqualified notion of God's *Existenz*, which is precisely that upon which the fool's rejection depends. Accordingly, the fool does not follow the procedure indicated by the name of God, a procedure which demands a differentiation between the general concept of *Existenz* and the *Dasein* offered by Anselm's faith-ful way of knowing.

Barth's discussion of the relationship between the fool and Anselm's proof opens up more fully into the heart of *Proslogion 2* at the point at which Anselm argues: "*Et certe id quo mains cogitari nequit, non potest esse in solo intellectu.*"<sup>47</sup> Barth translates Anselm at this point as follows: "And certainly 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived' cannot exist [*da sein*] only in knowledge."<sup>48</sup> Barth is therefore building on what he has previously said concerning the reasons why Anselm begins with the thought of God's being [*Gedachtsein*] and the way this thought implies an ontic object [*Dasein*]. Barth believes that the significance of this portion of Anselm's *Proslogion* is rooted in the recognition that if we are to discuss the existence of God, we will have to do so in relation to all other existing things as we know them. In other words, when we say God exists outside the mind, we are confronted with the comparison between how we know other things that also exist outside the mind. This is the first [*zunächst*] time that this aspect of Anselm's proof of God's existence is raised in which "things which are different from God also exist [*existiert*],"<sup>49</sup> and it is in this sense that Barth refers to *Proslogion 2* as a proof of the *general* existence of God.

What Anselm is proving in *Proslogion 2*, according to Barth, derives from two concerns: (1) to demonstrate that there is a necessary pathway from our own understanding of God's existence purely in the mind to God's existence as such and (2) that Anselm's name for God—"that than which nothing greater can be conceived"—demands an objective existence that beckons beyond even itself. Anselm's text is as follows: "*Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet, et in intellectu et in re,*" which Barth translates in his usual way: "Thus objectively as well as in knowledge there does undoubtedly exist [*ist da*] 'something than which nothing greater can be conceived.'"<sup>50</sup> Thus, the point of *Proslogion 2* is to demonstrate the general sense in which objective ontic *Dasein* as well as existence in the mind alone [*Gedachtsein*] can be attributed to God. As Barth concludes his exegesis of *Proslogion 2*, he draws specific attention to the translation of this text given in other German commentaries. Importantly, the German translation Barth cites uses *existiert*. This gives Barth an occasion to draw attention to his own use of *Dasein* and how that is importantly different in what he is doing in his own explication of Anselm's proof. The point Barth wishes to stress is the theological muddle that arises when "existence" is used ambiguously in commentaries on Anselm. "It follows from the whole content of the chapter that the emphasis of the sentence is not on this *existit*, which in itself is ambiguous, but on what explains it—*et in intellectu et in re*. Not till then does the *existit* become unambiguous."<sup>51</sup> Hence, for Barth the name of God in *Proslogion 2* is the place to begin because it is in this name that the meaning of objective existence can be properly understood. This is why Barth spends so much time delineating the different senses of existence implied by that name.

Developing the meaning of the notion of *Dasein* as the ontic objective existence allows Barth to be more true to the logic of Anselm's proof. By explicating the manner in which God becomes there for us in a determinate objective sense [*Dasein*], Barth is able to emphasize more clearly what previous commentators did not when they attributed *Existenz* to Anselm's proof in a more univocal, and thus ambiguous, sense. By exploiting the different nuances in German, Barth attempts to capture more appropriately what Anselm's name for God implies in terms of its objective existence beyond thought. *Dasein* already implies this existence over-against-thought and better captures what Barth believes Anselm is after in *Proslogion 2*. In short, all Barth believes Anselm has been proving in *Proslogion 2* is the general sense in which this objective existence [*Dasein*] is attributable to God in a way that is beyond mere existence in the mind alone. *Existenz* thus becomes for Barth the overarching concept against which he will develop the general sense in which *Dasein* clarifies the ambiguous uses of *esse/existit* in Anselm.

Barth concludes his discussion of *Proslogion 2* precisely where *Proslogion 3* will begin. That is, all Barth sought to establish with the first proof was that, due to the nature of the name for God, any attribution of objective existence will necessarily have to go beyond thought alone. Thus, God's existence was

being discussed in terms of the manner in which *Dasein* captured its nature as over-against thought. Barth is quick to point out, however, the negative nature of this proof.<sup>52</sup> Anselm's proof does not say anything unique or specifically positive about God's existence; rather it leaves a vacuum out of which a positive and specific attribution of existence would have to follow. Although God must be beyond thought and share in existence with all other existents, God's existence must, in the end, go beyond all other existents if God is to remain God. It is in this vacuum that Barth begins his explication of *Proslogion* 3 as follows: "*Quod non possit cogitari non esse*. That he could not be conceived [*gedacht*] as not existing [*nicht-daseiend*]." <sup>53</sup> Note the use of present participle *daseiend* here. In using this term Barth emphasizes the present active sense in which we can attribute existence to God, which relates to existing things. As Barth goes on to say, "this heading denotes the second, more specific meaning of *vere sit*: God exists [*ist da*] in such a way (true only of him) that it is impossible for him to be conceived as not existing [*nicht-daseiend*]." <sup>54</sup> It is in this sense that Barth can then narrow what he means by the general concept of the *Existenz* of God to the special sense in which it is proved in *Proslogion* 3. <sup>55</sup>

Barth asks how *Proslogion* 3 is anything "more than a mere repetition or underlining of this result from *Prosl. 2*?" <sup>56</sup> His answer follows the contours of the linguistic differentiations he has been making throughout his exegesis of Anselm's argument.

Answers: in *Prosl. 2* the concept of existence [*Begriff von Existenz*] was expressly the general concept of existence [*Dasein*] in thought [*Denken*] and in objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*]. On that basis it was proved that it is impossible to conceive of God if his existence [*Dasein*] in thought [*Denken*] and in objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*] are denied. <sup>57</sup>

The concept of *Existenz* articulated in *Proslogion* 2 was expressly the general concept of *Dasein* in *Denken* and in objectivity [*Gegenständlichkeit*]. <sup>58</sup> God's existence has to be clarified beyond a general concept of *Existenz*. That is why Barth introduces *Dasein* in the first place. It is only therefore as *nicht-daseiend*, insofar as God alone is impossible not to be, that Barth will argue that a positive attribution of *Existenz* to God can be proved. It is under these conditions alone that Barth can say that "the limitation [*Restriktion*] on the concept of existence [*Existenzbegriffs*]*—esse in intellectu et in re—*with which it was applied to God in *Prosl. 2*, now disappears." <sup>59</sup> The reason this positive attribution of *Dasein* to God comes about depends upon the negative *nicht-daseiend* that makes up the heart of *Proslogion* 3: It is this aspect of the proof that is "not a repetition but a vital narrowing of the result of *Prosl. 2*." <sup>60</sup> Barth will therefore continue his discussion of the existence of God as that special *Existenz* which arises in the aftermath of Barth's clarification of how *Dasein* is properly attributable to God only as *nicht-daseiend*.

One of the more interesting ways that Barth develops his nuanced attribution of *Dasein* to God is through Gaunilo's critique of Anselm's argument.<sup>61</sup> Gaunilo thinks it would have been better if Anselm had said, "we cannot know God as existing [*nicht-daseiend*] or possibly not existing [*nicht daseiend*]." <sup>62</sup> Barth finds Gaunilo's "possibly" quite troublesome because Gaunilo here assumes that he is taking the more humble ground by acknowledging the limits of human knowledge. In Barth's view, Gaunilo has taken the place of Descartes insofar as he questions his own existence and all other things, and in like manner assumes an interconnection between his doubt of his own existence and God's.<sup>63</sup> Gaunilo's thinking proceeds something like this: If we could possibly hypothesize our own non-existence and the non-existence of all other things, then in what sense can we make axiomatic claims upon the existence of God? "Do I exist [*Ob ich bin*]? Does God exist [*Ob Gott ist*]? What thinking [*Denken*] could decide these conclusively? Be my knowledge [*Wissen*] in all these points ever so sure, pure thinking [*reines Denken*] as such is here as free as it is insufficient to make this decision."<sup>64</sup> Barth then cites Aquinas' conclusion concerning Anselm's proof: "we can conceive of God as not existing [*nicht-daseiend*]." <sup>65</sup> Here again we must emphasize how Barth is resurrecting the critiques of Gaunilo and Aquinas in order specifically to point out the problems that arise whenever one interprets Anselm's argument in a univocally ontological sense.<sup>66</sup>

Anselm's response to Gaunilo specifically engages the confusion between the question of human and divine being and the special sense in which *Proslogion 3* attributes existence to God and God alone. As Barth argues, "The statement, 'God cannot be conceived as not existing' [*Gott kann nicht als nicht-daseiend gedacht werden*], can only have one subject [*Subjekt*], 'God'. For all existing beings [*Daseiende*]<sup>67</sup> apart from God can be conceived as not existing [*Nicht-daseiend*]." <sup>68</sup> Here Barth makes it clear that "there is no analogous [*analogen*] statement (Anselm is not Descartes) concerning man's own existence [*Dasein*]." <sup>69</sup> It is because Gaunilo thinks of existence in an undifferentiated, unqualified sense that Barth prohibits analogy. As we will see in *Proslogion 4*, Barth makes more positive statements about analogical relations, which will be important for our conclusion. Leaving that conversation in abeyance for the moment, however, Barth here uses analogy as a foil against which he seeks to ensure that what is being attributed to God in *Proslogion 3* is a unique form of existence. Again, this is what is distinctive and special about *Proslogion 3* as opposed to *Proslogion 2*. In the latter, Barth developed the difference between existence in thought alone and the existence of objects. In the former, what Barth brings to the fore is the way in which the uniqueness of God's existence is beyond thought and object and how that form of existence can be attributed to God as a subject unto himself.

The relation between *Proslogion 2* and *Proslogion 3* becomes the basis upon which Barth establishes the necessity of his own interpretation and clarification of Anselm's proof. All roads lead to this conclusion. The heart of

Anselm's proof is often overlooked precisely because it is assumed that in proving the existence of the object of faith, Anselm did not in fact go much farther in his proof toward explicating the unique existence of God in *Proslogion* 3. But if God exists in such a way that he cannot fail to be, then Barth achieves both a positive attribution of existence to God in such a way that it applies only to God. It is from this point, then, that existence is properly attributed to other existing things as well. Gaunilo is right insofar as he questions his own existence and all other existing things. But insofar as God is God—i.e. God exists such that he cannot not exist—then his existence takes on its special character. Furthermore, God's existence becomes the only certain existence through which the existence of all other existing things is a real possibility. God's existence, in other words, gives [*gibt*] all other existing things their existence. As Barth expresses it:

The reason why there is [*gibt es*] such a thing as *Dasein* is that God exists [*da ist*]. With his *Dasein* stands or falls the *Dasein* of all essences [*Wesen*] that are distinct from him. Only fools and their theological and philosophical supporters, the Gaunilos, could think that the criterion of general *Dasein* is the criterion of God's *Dasein* and could therefore either not get beyond *Prosl.* 2 or take *Prosl.* 3 as conditioned by *Prosl.* 2. Whereas it is all the other way round: it is the *Dasein* of God that is the criterion of general *Dasein* and if either of these two chapters of Anselm is ultimately or decisively conditioned by the other, then it is *Prosl.* 2 by *Prosl.* 3, and not *vice versa*.<sup>70</sup>

Barth's condemnation of the fools who miss the uniqueness of *Proslogion* 3 should not be missed. Barth clearly states that anyone who presumes the proof of the existence of God in knowledge and as an object in *Proslogion* 2 has fundamentally misunderstood the force of what Anselm is proving in *Proslogion* 3. It is not enough to presume that beyond objective existence there remains post-ontological Truth, or a realism which does not take seriously just how its reality exists in relation to our own.<sup>71</sup> Hence, the existence of God, precisely because it is that conception which cannot not exist, becomes the condition upon which we can credibly attribute existence to all other existing things.<sup>72</sup>

When Barth comes to *Proslogion* 4, therefore, he will turn his attention to the fool's statement "*Gott ist nicht da*,"<sup>73</sup> and in so doing point to those later fools who came after Gaunilo and who presumed to have overcome his argument (i.e. Kant, towards whom Barth directs his closing remarks). Barth addresses the fool's denial through two questions: "1. How far can he say what he can in no sense conceive? 2. How far can he conceive what he can in no sense say?"<sup>74</sup> The problem is that in denying that which is greater than he can conceive, the fool presumes a verdict upon something that is beyond the power of his judgment. The only validity the fool can claim for his denial, therefore, is that no such distinction obtains between the fool's existence and

God's existence. But as Barth points out, "the assertion and the denial of the Existence [*Existenz*] of God do not take place . . . on the same plane at all."<sup>75</sup> In other words, the fool makes a statement about God's existence on a different level than the judgment of that existence. This occurs when inaccurate statements are made about the existence of God, which means that the judgment pronounced on that existence does not apply.<sup>76</sup>

Barth eventually works his way back to Anselm's starting point: the knowledge of God's existence in the mind as that than which nothing greater can be conceived. He takes us back to Anselm's plea to the *insipiens* to acknowledge the existence of that which must, of necessity, be greater than what he can conceive. "Even if every conceivable physical and moral property were raised to the *n*<sup>th</sup> degree, that could quite well be nothing more than the sum total of the predicates of a purely conceptual essence [*Wesen*]."<sup>77</sup> On the fool's terms, in other words, whatever counts for existence cannot transcend the limits of the fool's finite, conceptual possibilities. The fool thus remains trapped in his own mind of docetic conceptualities. Here Barth offers a tantalizing characterization of analogy, one over which many later commentators have labored in attempting to interpret Barth's theological development. "The fact that *id quod Deus est* is synonymous with God himself makes this analogical, 'speculative' understanding of his reality [*Wirklichkeit*] into true knowledge of his essence [*Wesen*]<sup>78</sup> and that creates the fully efficacious, indeed over-efficacious substitute for the missing (and necessarily missing) experiential knowledge of him."<sup>79</sup> Analogy thus functions as a stand in for existential experience and the presumption that human ontology must be the referent for our significations of God. In an undeveloped alternative way, analogy is here said to meld the *Deus est*—properly understood in terms of the rest of Anselm's proving—with God himself, such that the two are irreducibly intertwined. Of course, this is not, strictly speaking, a new use of analogy but rather a new approach to the way in which Barth, after this time, conceives of God and by what he means when he says "God is God." This may explain why Barth concludes his book by refusing as appropriate the designation of Anselm's argument as "ontological" and why he simply side-steps Kant's critique of Anselm's proof.<sup>80</sup>

Kant's discussion of Anselm's argument pursues a use of ontological language that Barth has here left behind. Kant tended to use *Dasein* and *Existenz* interchangeably in reference to the analytic attribution of existence to God. Kant's concern comes down to whether our attribution of existence to God is an analytic or synthetic proposition.<sup>81</sup> "If it is the former, then with *Dasein* you add nothing to your thought of the thing; but then either the thought that is in you must be the thing itself, or else you have presupposed a *Dasein* as belonging to possibility, and then inferred that *Dasein* on this pretext from its inner possibility, which is nothing but a miserable tautology."<sup>82</sup> Kant's contention here is that "*Sein* is not a real predicate,"<sup>83</sup> and that however and whatever we say when we say God exists cannot impart any possibility

beyond what is already inherent to God. The reason Barth argues that no words ought to be wasted on Kant's critique of this argument is because, as Barth has shown, he believes that when Kant denies the existence of God he adopts the same position as the *insipiens*. If we follow Anselm's proof what we find is that the attribution of existence to God is unique and altogether different in kind from the attribution of existence to all other things. If we presume that there is only one form of existence that is univocally attributable to both God and humans, then we could very well come to the conclusions Kant did. This would have devastating consequences for Barth's own early articulation "God is God." But this is precisely what Barth, after his engagement with Anselm, recognizes is not the case. The "is" in his early statement "God is God" required the qualifications he gained through his exegesis of Anselm. It is in this same sense that we must be careful not to repeat the same mistake by assuming that Barth entertained an unqualified understanding of existence at this time in his theological development. Barth's theology does in fact develop these ontological nuances at this juncture and explains why, from this time forward, he consistently cites the importance of his book on Anselm.

### *Barth's Ontological Development*

At first glance, what Barth has done in his Anselm book is quite subtle and its significance could be easily missed. In order to highlight the ways it has been missed in the past we return to Bruce McCormack's summary dismissal of Barth's book on Anselm. We do not have the space to rehearse McCormack's argument more generally here, but it bears mentioning the details of his specific critiques of those who cite Anselm's significance in Barth's theology. McCormack lists five possible reasons why Anselm has been deemed of significance for Barth and by exploring these we gain an overview of the secondary literature more broadly. This will allow us to make further comments upon the implications Barth's account of onto-theology has for contemporary theologians working in his wake.

First, citing Michael Beintker, McCormack takes on the argument that in Barth's commentary on Anselm "Truth makes itself *objective* for us without becoming ensnared in the network of the Cartesian subject-object polarity."<sup>84</sup> Because McCormack locates this extrication from Cartesian subject-object relations earlier, it therefore cannot be deemed a significant shift at Anselm. McCormack himself would wholeheartedly agree that Truth stands over against and beyond all human noetic capacities. What both Beintker and McCormack fail to do, however, is account for the unique existence of that Truth.<sup>85</sup> That is what Barth deems so important. This is one of the most significant oversights in the literature on Barth's Anselm book. When commentators have noted what they have variously described as the theological realism,<sup>86</sup> eschatological realism,<sup>87</sup> or *Realdialektik*,<sup>88</sup> in Barth's thought, they

too easily overlook the specific way Barth came to understand the difference between how that reality is known by us as an object [*Dasein*], and how that objective existence could be attributed to God alone as true existence [*Wahrsein*]. If we are to understand what Barth himself pointed to in Anselm, we must go beyond the assumption, as Barth himself did, "that theological assertions, if true, are true because there is some sort of objective order that they conform to, independently of our ability to recognise them as true."<sup>89</sup> To say that God is God, or God is Truth, fails to account for the ontological progress Barth makes through his account of Anselm.

Secondly, again citing Beintker, McCormack notes: "'With the turn to a position which can proceed from the objectivity and knowability of the Truth in the *ratio fidei*, the necessity for the thought-form of dialectic on the noetic plane falls away. Here logic takes the place of dialectic.'"<sup>90</sup> Because McCormack deems the Anselm book, along with Barth's later theology, to be inherently dialectical, this argument itself falls away. McCormack's second point is therefore closely related to his third. Namely, the long influential view of Balthasar that "with the Anselm book, Barth turned 'from dialectic to analogy.'"<sup>91</sup> Without rehearsing the details of McCormack's argument here we can in fact take his point further. To say that Barth gains a set of analogical relations in Anselm, as Balthasar seems to suggest,<sup>92</sup> not only overlooks the fact that Barth discusses analogical relations in his theology before this time in his *Göttingen Dogmatics*, for instance,<sup>93</sup> but also that his discussion of analogy in his explication of Anselm's *Proslogion* 2-4 is insufficiently developed.

What then can be made of Barth's various references to analogy in his commentary on Anselm? Barth mentions on five occasions the analogical relation between God's existence and all other existences, but these references differ in emphasis and in no way give a clear picture of what precisely he means by analogy. To be sure, Barth employs the term with reference to the attribution of existence to God and it is in this regard that he uses the term analogy in both a positive and negative sense. When Barth disparages the use of analogy, he does so in contexts where, for example, he commends Anselm for being content simply to uncover "formal analogies;"<sup>94</sup> or where he discusses "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" as something which we do not know analogically, but which points out precisely why it cannot be known analogously;<sup>95</sup> or, lastly, where he argues that Anselm offers no analogous relationship between a statement about his own existence and God's.<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, when Barth uses the term in a positive sense he has in mind the way that the unique existence of God advocated by Anselmic theologic makes the "analogical speculative understanding of his reality [*Wirklichkeit*] into true knowledge."<sup>97</sup> The point is that Anselm's argument in some way redeems an analogical understanding of God that, on Barth's understanding, would in all other cases be inadequate. In a way, this makes Barth's use of analogy a kind of negative counter against other forms of

analogy, specifically his understanding of the Catholic doctrine of *analogia entis* in his *Church Dogmatics*.<sup>98</sup>

In other words, if we assume that Barth's central interest in explicating Anselm's theology is to demonstrate the efficacy of a shift to analogy, then we are faced with the question of how are we to deal with a series of negative comments coupled with a vacuous affirmation designed to follow the logic of Anselm's name for God. If, however, we presume that the focus of Barth's book is upon the ontological difference Anselm's *Proslogion* evinces, then a much more clear picture emerges concerning why Barth would have cited this book as one of the most significant in his own theological development. The emphasis upon analogical relations as a turning point of Barth's Anselm book can be best understood according to the way particular commentators have understood it—such as Hans Urs von Balthasar.<sup>99</sup>

If we return to Balthasar's own discussion of Anselm's influence upon Barth, we find that Balthasar does briefly explicate the difference between God's Existence [*Existenz*], and God as an ontic object of faith [*Dasein*]. Although he makes little of it, he does in fact cite a specific use of *Existenz* in relation to the event of God's self-revelation that comes close to what we are arguing was Barth's intention throughout his Anselm book. In Balthasar's words,

Whatever is thought [*gedacht*] is thought [*gedacht*] from this event [*Ereignisses*]. This shows that, rooted in this event, the very thought of the concept of God [*Gottesbegriff*] ('greater than which cannot be conceived' as the name and pointer for the intended incomprehensible content) would be a contradiction unless we assented to the existence [*Existenz*] of such a content. And this existence [*Existenz*] is not merely a *de facto* [*faktischen*] existence (which means it might also *not* exist [*dasein*] in the factual order) but divine and absolute.<sup>100</sup>

Here Balthasar refers *Dasein* to the factual order in a way that sets up his later discussion of the relative and absolute being of God. Importantly, he tends to blur somewhat the distinction between divine and human being that we have been arguing is at the heart of Barth's explication of Anselm's *Proslogion*. As Balthasar says: "Only because there is absolute Truth [*Wahrheit*] and absolute existence [*Dasein*] are there relative truth [*Wahrheit*] and relative existence [*Dasein*]; the latter are completely 'real and true existence [*Dasein*]' and real and true truth [*Wahrheit*] but analogous being [*Sein*] and analogous truth [*Wahrheit*]."<sup>101</sup> This language was most likely used to support Balthasar's argument for the importance of the analogous relation between the *Dasein*, which is attributable to God alone, and all other objective *Dasein*. As we have discussed above, it is only because it is impossible for God not to exist [*nicht daseiend*] that Barth will positively attribute *Dasein* to God, which in a sense constitutes a proof of God's *Existenz*. Although Balthasar is, strictly speaking, correct in noting the interconnection in Barth's use of *Dasein*, Balthasar does

not give sufficient attention to the nuances that Barth worked out in the Anselm book. Consequently, those who follow his commentary tend to focus upon analogy rather than ontology. In this sense, the secondary literature following Balthasar makes little of the ontological distinctions.<sup>102</sup> This may explain why McCormack, in the end, inherited Balthasar's discussion of Anselm in the way that he did. The importance he failed to grasp was not simply the emphasis upon analogy, but the ontological development that discussion concealed.

Fourthly, McCormack takes note of the belief that "In the Anselm book, Barth stressed for the first time that ontic necessity and rationality have an ontological priority over noetic necessity and rationality."<sup>103</sup> Here McCormack rightly points out, this time in agreement with Beintker,<sup>104</sup> that the priority of the reality of God predates the Anselm book. We would agree with McCormack that the significance of Anselm cannot be granted according to an *unqualified* understanding of how ontology precedes epistemology, or the way Barth discusses an ontic necessity and rationality over a noetic one as has been maintained by Ingrid Spieckermann, Eberhard Jüngel and T. F. Torrance.<sup>105</sup> If ontic priority is understood to mean that theological realism precedes human noetic capacities, then Barth's 1920s tautology, "God is God," is the proper location for this aspect of his theology. Our contention, however, is that to stress this understanding is to miss Barth's distinction between the ontic object of faith [*Dasein*] and the positive attribution of *Existenz* to God as *nicht daseiend*, which is a far more important contribution to Barth's development in his book on Anselm than commentators have allowed heretofore. To say that God exists, is much different than articulating the unique existence of God such that no confusion could be made between God's objective *Dasein* as it is revealed to us and God's *Existenz* in and for himself. To argue that an ontic priority develops in Barth's discussion of Anselm leaves open the question: "Which ontology? God's or our own?" It is our contention that when Barth denies the attribution of "ontological" to Anselm's proof, while simultaneously maintaining the ontological differentiations between *Existenz*, *Dasein*, and *nicht-daseiend*, he is in fact progressing beyond a univocal understanding of ontology. Our explication of Anselm's *Proslogion* significantly moves on from Barth's earlier understanding of ontology captured in his expression "God is God." Barth, however, began to differentiate himself from Brunner and it was precisely because this aspect of the discussion was lost in his No! to Brunner that Barth consistently pointed his readers to his Anselm book where his understanding of the difference between our existence and God's was much more explicit.<sup>106</sup>

McCormack, fifthly, misses the importance of Anselm's proof for Barth when he argues that "in *Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, Barth overcame every last remnant of the attempt to ground, support, or justify theology by means of existential philosophy."<sup>107</sup> To be sure, the political reasons McCormack cites for Barth's critique of his contemporaries cannot be extricated from Barth's

concern that an unqualified onto-theology is discernable in Brunner's theology, and even in his own. However, when McCormack claims that Barth's intentions were never to ground his theology existentially, he misses the significance of the need Barth felt to clarify the relation between ontology and theology. McCormack dismisses the importance of this clarification and in so doing misses what was of central concern to Barth at this time. "Now I must make myself clear!"<sup>108</sup> Barth may well have always intended the radical Truth of God's existence from early on in his theology, but what drove him forward was a clear articulation of the existence of that Truth.

Our justification for underscoring the central significance of Anselm here ultimately leads us to Barth's 1956 lecture *The Humanity of God*, where Barth acknowledges: "We were wrong exactly where we were right, that at first I did not know how to carry through with sufficient care and thoroughness the new knowledge of the *deity* of God which was so exciting both to myself and to others."<sup>109</sup> Our own investigation into the juncture at which Barth adjusted his view on his earlier "God is God" formula presumes a negative judgment upon McCormack's contention that Barth exaggerates the uniqueness of his 1930 book on Anselm in order to distance himself from his theological contemporaries like Gogarten, Bultmann and Brunner.<sup>110</sup> Barth's desire to distance himself from his theological contemporaries is, strictly speaking, accurate. But the reasons and manner in which he did so cannot be relegated to a "personality quirk,"<sup>111</sup> or mere exaggeration. There were many more substantive ontological reasons why Barth differed from his fellow theologians. Clarifying and making those differences more pronounced was thus Barth's task. What we have demonstrated in this article is that Barth held himself to a higher criterion for the articulation of the ontological relations his theology implied than later theologians have often demanded. Furthermore, the *way* Barth came to understand the existence of God in his Anselm book is far more significant than the analogical relations subsequent scholars and theologians would derive from that understanding. In this sense, Barth's early affirmation, "God is God," implied an ontological priority with which Barth became wholly dissatisfied as the existentialism of his fellow dialectical theologians became more pronounced in the 1930s.

By considering Barth's disposition towards his book on Anselm, we can appreciate and perhaps even regain some of his ontological sensitivities. Our suggestion is that this is precisely what is needed if we are to recover Barth's own self-understanding of the change that he referred to in the early 1930s. Moreover, by investigating the ontological nuances of Barth's theological development, we gain crucial insight into the ways in which Protestant metaphysics were transfigured in Barth's thought. Our statements here therefore imply that Barth may in fact have been far more honest about the clarity he gained in his thinking in the early 1930s and the way Anselm helped him gain that clarity than McCormack, and others, have allowed. There is no reason why this understanding of Anselm's significance could not be appended to

McCormack's account of Barth's development, but the onto-theological nature of that development would need to be adjusted. Should McCormack's account of Barth be "clarified" in this way, it would lead us to commentators who have recognized the ontological sensitivity in Barth's theology. The recent commentators closest to our own position on the ontological difference in Barth's Anselm book are Graham Ward and Merold Westphal.

Ward's explication of Barth's Anselm book, albeit brief, comments on the ontological differentiations he gained there. Ward rightly points out that Barth did not learn a theological method from Anselm, but rather he came to understand how "the being of objects in the world and the existence of God are not the same. One is not quantitatively different from the other—they are dipolar."<sup>112</sup> The term dipolar, however, misleadingly gives the impression that the two forms of being are related dialectically in Barth's thought, and Ward goes on to discern a "dialectic of being" which he correlates to Heidegger's ontological difference.<sup>113</sup> Here we must raise a question concerning the relationship between Barth and Heidegger, which Ward's account implies. To this end, it will be helpful to briefly note Heidegger's 1928 lecture "Phenomenology and Theology," where he develops the difference between "the two basic possibilities of science: sciences of whatever is, or ontic [*ontische*] sciences; and *the science of Being [Sein], the ontological science, philosophy.*"<sup>114</sup> Barth's use of ontic in his Anselm book shares a structural similarity to Heidegger's insofar as ontic refers to the apprehensible being of things as they become known to us, hence Barth's prohibition against attributing a general unqualified existence [*Existenz*] to God. The difference between them, however, arises insofar as Heidegger gives primacy to his Ontological science and in this sense cuts theology off from his desire to look Being in the face.<sup>115</sup> It was this dichotomization of Ontology and theology at this early stage in Heidegger's career that sets up his later 1956 critique of "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics."<sup>116</sup> At no point in Barth's theological development did he develop an alternative science of Being, or Ontology of ontology in the way Heidegger did. Heidegger's concern is to ensure that the deity does not enter into philosophy and as such does not concern himself with attributing true existence to God. This is Barth's primary concern, which is another way of saying that Barth's interest in Anselm's way of doing theology is an attempt to clarify the "is" in his earlier "God is God."

Although Ward is one of the few contemporary commentators to note the ontological difference Barth gained in Anselm, he too nonetheless fails to clarify the difference between Barth and Heidegger's form of post-ontological theology in a satisfactory way. Ward's insight into Anselm is therefore difficult to extricate from those other comparisons between Barth and Heidegger that locate Barth's critique of onto-theology at his *Römerbrief* and early lectures in the 1920s. For instance, Merold Westphal locates Barth's fundamental critique of metaphysics "developed along the lines of a physics,"<sup>117</sup> at his 1920 lecture "Biblical Insights, Questions and Vistas."<sup>118</sup> It is in

this light that Westphal presumes that “we can understand Barth’s critique of liberal Protestant theology best if we see it as a critique of onto-theology that differs from Heidegger’s in coming several decades earlier and in having a much broader scope.”<sup>119</sup> By locating ontological difference in Barth’s early articulation “God is God,” however, Westphal repeats the mistake McCormack made; namely, it fails to note the nuance of what was in fact new in Barth’s Anselm book. Consequently, Westphal does not spend any significant time on Anselm as a result.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, Westphal’s claim that ontological difference occurs much earlier on in Barth’s development means that he fails to note the difference between the theological critique of onto-theology, which Barth maintained with his “God is God” in the early 1920s, and the ontological difference he works out in his Anselm book in 1930. Ward, on the other hand, rightly locates ontological difference at 1930, but fails to account for any development in Barth’s ontological theology—all of which makes it difficult to differentiate Ward’s account of Barth’s ontology from Westphal’s.

Such accounts of the similarity between Barth and Heidegger have led to a consistent correlation between contemporary theologians like Jean-Luc Marion and Barth. Marion, like Heidegger, suggests a post-ontological theology or a *God without Being*. For Marion, God is not bound to metaphysics any more than he is to any other philosophical system. He stands as the infinite ineffable, beyond concept and representation. In his view, “the destruction of onto-theology’s conceptual idols . . . would clear a space for the ‘icon,’ that is, a space for the ‘negative theophany.’”<sup>121</sup> In response to the idol of ontologically corrupted theology, Marion answers with the infinite distance of the icon.<sup>122</sup> Given the affinity often assumed in the secondary literature between Barth’s critique of conceptual idolatry, and indeed as we have noted above by Barth himself, critics of Marion, such as John Milbank, depict his theology as a kind of Heideggerian Barthianism.<sup>123</sup> Milbank’s comment is partly explained by his sometimes reductive treatment of Barth’s theology as anti-philosophical.<sup>124</sup> Because Milbank is determined to overcome metaphysics with a robust theological domestication of ontology, he will challenge any strict delineation between metaphysics and theology. Rather, theology “must evacuate philosophy, which is metaphysics, leaving it nothing . . . to either do or see.”<sup>125</sup>

By properly returning Barth to the theological account of ontology as developed in his Anselm book, we are able to emphasize how Barth’s theology differs from Marion’s and Heidegger’s revulsion against ontological theology. What we have been arguing is that Barth’s theology is far from a strictly post-ontological account. Rather, Barth develops a notion of ontological difference that is inherently theological and in this sense rejects any radical difference between theology and ontology. Barth’s goal is, in the end, to affirm that God *is* God, albeit in a more nuanced way than he did in the early 1920s. In this sense, we are confirming the interpretations of those commentators who understand Barth’s theology to be a critical form of

metaphysical theology. For instance, in *With the Grain of the Universe*, Stanley Hauerwas discusses Barth's theology in a complementary if not positive relation to John Milbank's "Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics."<sup>126</sup> A similar interpretation is found in Fergus Kerr's essay on Barth in *Immortal Longings*. Here Kerr agrees with Robert Jenson's thesis that Barth puts "the historical event of Jesus' existence in the place formerly occupied by changeless 'Being.'"<sup>127</sup> A common theme amongst various contemporary interpreters of Barth, therefore, is that Barth's theology is a deeply ontological form of theology. We likewise argue that Barth's theology goes beyond an affirmation of philosophical realism and is much more broad in its metaphysical implications. It is important, then, to eschew any easy equivalent between Barth and Heideggerian forms of ontological difference. Instead, it is incumbent to return Barth to Anselm, for by so doing we can appropriately situate Barth within the contemporary debates concerning the credibility of a theological account of the existence of God.

## NOTES

- 1 Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (London: SCM Press, 1960), p. 7/G1.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (London: SCM Press, 1976), p. 169.
- 4 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 8/G3.
- 5 Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, III/4 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), p. xii, Karl Barth, *How I Changed My Mind* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966), pp. 42–43.
- 6 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 8/G3.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 8 cf. n1/G n3.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 11/G6.
- 9 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco, CA: Communio Books, Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 93.
- 10 Jeffrey C. Pugh, *The Anselmic Shift: Christology and Method in Karl Barth's Theology* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 93–118.
- 11 Hans W. Frei, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth 1909–1922" (Doctoral Dissertation, Yale, 1956), pp. 193–194, Eberhard Jüngel, *Karl Barth: A Theological Legacy*, first American ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 41ff., Henri Bouillard, *The Knowledge of God* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), pp. 63ff.
- 12 Bruce L. McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909–1936* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 421.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 423.
- 14 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 73/G75.
- 15 *Ibid.*, p. 74/G75.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 75/G77.
- 17 *Ibid.* I will be referring to Ian Robertson's 1958 translation of the second edition of Barth's *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* and will give the page number's for *Gesamtausgabe* volume 13 Karl Barth, *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981). I have, wherever possible, left the different words Barth uses for existence, i.e. *Existenz*, *Dasein*, and *daseiend* in German, thus assuming a certain familiarity with these terms in philosophical English. As well, I have made more consistent translation of *Wesen* as essence, *Wahrheit* as truth, and *Gegenständlichkeit* as objectivity. It should be noted that Barth does not clarify whether he is following a particular usage of any of these terms according to any previous authors. Given that Kant invariably used *Dasein* and *Existenz* synonymously, our argument here is

that what Barth is doing in his book on Anselm is something different than Kant. Howard Caygill, *Existence* (Blackwell Reference Online, 1995 [cited July 12 2007]); available from [http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631175353\\_chunk\\_g97806311753539\\_ss1-17](http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9780631175353_chunk_g97806311753539_ss1-17). Having said that, his use of *Dasein* does not follow Heidegger's precisely and is closer in its use of *Existenz* to Karl Jasper's terminology in his 1932 work Karl Jaspers, *Philosophy*, trans. E. B. Ashton (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1969). Given that Barth's book on Anselm is written before the publication of Jasper's book, and to my knowledge Barth had no relation to Jaspers during this time, then it seems safe to say that it is not Jaspers who is the inspiration for Barth's language—although Barth does engage Jasper's use of *Existenz* in *Church Dogmatics* III.2, p. 113ff. in a relatively positive light and Barth did teach as a colleague of Jasper's in Berne from 1948 onwards. See Busch, *Karl Barth*, p. 351. A better suggestion concerning the source of Barth's existential terminology, and this is the one we are assuming here, is that Barth may have shared Jaspers' interest in Hegel's use of these terms. For instance, it seems likely that Barth may have, at least at the back of his mind, Hegel's use of *Existenz* as follows: "*Existenz*, on Hegel's account, is a determination of essence. In the Logic it follows the category of ground: the notion of a ground develops into that of a condition (a *sine qua non*), and when the totality of conditions is realized the thing or matter (*Sache*) emerges into existence. The existent (*das Existierendes*) is a thing (*Ding*) with many properties." M. J. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 94–95. This contrasts with *Dasein* in Hegel as follows: "*Dasein*, Hegel says, is being (*Sein*) with determinacy (*Bestimmtheit*), an immediate determinacy (in contrast to an underlying essence), that is, a quality. (Hence *Dasein*, in this context, is usually translated as 'determinate being.')" Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p. 94. Determine existence or objective existence is more or less what we believe Barth is after in his use of *Dasein* below and this discussion of Hegel's terminology at least offers some context for Barth's thought. The problem with attributing *Dasein* to God is precisely Barth's problem in his book on Anselm. Inwood's discussion of *Dasein*, *Daseiendes* and *Existenz* in Hegel in fact will track closely with Barth's use of these terms in his book on Anselm and so we will promote this affinity in our translations below. That said, Barth does not cite Hegel in any sense, which leaves us with the presumption that all such conversations concerning what Barth means by *Existenz*, *Dasein* and *daseiendes* comes down to Barth's own development of these terms.

18 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 44/G44.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Ibid.*, p. 45/G45.

21 *Ibid.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p. 48/G47.

25 Eberhard Busch, "God is God: The Meaning of a Controversial Formula and the Fundamental Problem of Speaking About God," *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin* Vol. 7, no. 2 (1986).

26 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, pp. 430–431.

27 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 47/G46–47.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 79/G81.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 80/G82.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 81/G82.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 90/G91.

32 Anselm, *The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 106.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 113–115.

34 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 92/G93.

35 *Ibid.*

36 I have specifically removed from this citation the following: "that is an object that is thought" because it is an addition to the German text that the translators seem to have added for clarification. In fact, this addition only confuses the point by referring to the object of thought, which is out of place in Barth's concise ordering of the relation between the object of thought, its existence in thought alone, and its true being.

- 37 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 92/G93–94.  
 38 *Ibid.*, p. 97, G99.  
 39 *Ibid.*, p. 100/G103.  
 40 *Ibid.*, p. 101/G103.  
 41 *Ibid.*  
 42 *Ibid.*, p. 102/G105.  
 43 *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103/G105.  
 44 Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p. 94.  
 45 Barth, *Anselm*, pp. 103–104/G106.  
 46 *Ibid.*, p. 105/G108.  
 47 *Ibid.*, p. 123/G126.  
 48 *Ibid.*  
 49 *Ibid.*  
 50 *Ibid.*, p. 127/G130.  
 51 *Ibid.*, pp. 127–128/G131.  
 52 *Ibid.*, p. 128/G131.  
 53 *Ibid.*, p. 132/G135.  
 54 *Ibid.*  
 55 *Ibid.*  
 56 *Ibid.*  
 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 132–133/G136.  
 58 This was translated as ‘reality’ in Robertson’s version.  
 59 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 134/G137.  
 60 *Ibid.*, p. 135/G138.  
 61 *Ibid.*  
 62 *Ibid.*  
 63 *Ibid.*, p. 137/G140.  
 64 *Ibid.*  
 65 *Ibid.*  
 66 Many scholars have addressed the accuracy of Barth’s various interpretations of Aquinas and the degree to which univocal Being is rightly attributed to him. See for instance, Eugene F. Rogers, *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth : sacred doctrine and the natural knowledge of God* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 64. See also Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 35–36. For an interesting interpretation of Aquinas’ understanding of Truth and its implications for his analogical ontology, see John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 34.  
 67 This was translated as “that exists,” which misses the substantive use of *Daseiende* here.  
 68 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 138/G141.  
 69 *Ibid.*, p. 139/G142.  
 70 *Ibid.*, pp. 154–155/G157–58.  
 71 *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156/G158–59.  
 72 *Ibid.*  
 73 *Ibid.*, p. 162/G165.  
 74 *Ibid.*  
 75 *Ibid.*, p. 163/G166.  
 76 *Ibid.*  
 77 *Ibid.*, p. 167/G170. Robertson chose to translate *Wesen* at this point as “being,” which is highly confusing given the rest of Barth’s language here.  
 78 Here Robertson translated *Wesen* as Nature.  
 79 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 167/G170.  
 80 *Ibid.*, p. 171/G174.  
 81 For a discussion of the difference between Kant’s analytic and synthetic propositions see Charles Parsons, “The Transcendental Aesthetic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 75–76.  
 82 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 566/A597/B625. I have inserted the German here from the online Project Gutenberg txt version. Immanuel Kant. “Kritik der reinen Vernunft

- (1787)." edited by Gerd Bouillon, (Place Published: Project Gutenberg, 2004), <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/8ikc210.txt> (accessed July 12, 2007).
- 83 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 567/A599/B627.
- 84 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 434, citing Michael Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der "dialektischen Theologie" Karl Barths: Studien zur Entwicklung der Barthschen Theologie und zur Vorgeschichte der "Kirchlichen Dogmatik"*, *Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie*; Bd. 101 (München: C. Kaiser, 1987), p. 191.
- 85 In our reading, the distinction between the object of faith [*Dasein*] and the unique existence of God [*Existenz*] is not emphasized or developed to any degree in Beintker. Rather, he stops with the relation between objective being [*Dasein*] and being in thought alone [*Gedachtsein*]. See Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der "dialektischen Theologie" Karl Barths*, pp. 187–191.
- 86 Graham White, "Barth's Theological Realism," *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 26 (1984).
- 87 Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," in *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays*, ed. Stephen Sykes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 88 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 432.
- 89 White, "Barth's Theological Realism," p. 57.
- 90 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 436, citing Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der "dialektischen Theologie" Karl Barths*, p. 188.
- 91 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 437.
- 92 Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, pp. 143–145, McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 437.
- 93 Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion*, ed. Hannelotte Reiffen, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), p. 94.
- 94 Barth, *Anselm*, p. 67/G67.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 112/G115.
- 96 *Ibid.*, p. 139/G142.
- 97 *Ibid.*, p. 167/G170.
- 98 Bouillard, *The Knowledge of God*, p. 115.
- 99 Stephen Wigley, "The von Balthasar Thesis: A Re-Examination of von Balthasar's Study of Barth in the Light of Bruce McCormack," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol. 56, no. 3 (2003), pp. 351–352. Wigley argues that Balthasar's approach may have skewed Barth's development to fit his own interest in analogy, but insofar as it illuminates Balthasar's interest and provides a point of discussion with Barth then it serves its purpose and is an important theological contribution which demands engagement. Wigley, "The von Balthasar Thesis," p. 345. Von Balthasar's own Roman Catholic heritage took its cues from Erich Przywara, who played a key role in renewing *analogia* as a primary locus of the theological task.
- 100 Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, p. 144/G156.
- 101 *Ibid.*, p. 144/G157. I have adjusted the translation of *Dasein* from "being" to "existence" in order to better suit our other translation of *Dasein* in Barth's Anselm book.
- 102 Frei, "The Doctrine of Revelation in the Thought of Karl Barth 1909–1922," pp. 6–7, 178; Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der "dialektischen Theologie" Karl Barths*, pp. 187–191; Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, pp. 42–43.
- 103 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 438.
- 104 Beintker, *Die Dialektik in der "dialektischen Theologie" Karl Barths*, p. 188.
- 105 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 438; Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, p. 42; Ingrid Spieckermann, *Gotteserkenntnis: ein Beitrag zur Grundfrage der neuen Theologie Karl Barths* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1985), pp. 228–229; Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *Karl Barth: An Introduction to His Early Theology, 1910–1931* (London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 182–183.
- 106 Barth, *How I Changed My Mind*, pp. 42–43.
- 107 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, p. 438.
- 108 Karl Barth, "No! Answer to Emil Brunner," in *Natural Theology: Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the Reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth*, ed. Peter Fraenkel (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1946), p. 73 translation as found in Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, p. 41.
- 109 Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (London: Collins, 1967), p. 44.
- 110 McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, pp. 442–447.
- 111 *Ibid.*, p. 442.

- 112 Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 101.
- 113 *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.
- 114 Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenology and Theology,” in *The Piety of Thinking*, edited by James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 6.
- 115 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1962), p. 23.
- 116 As Heidegger puts it, “the god-less thinking which must abandon the god of philosophy, god as *causa sui*, is thus perhaps closer to the divine God. Here this means only: god-less thinking is more open to Him than onto-theo-logic would like to admit.” Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 72.
- 117 Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928), p. 68.
- 118 Merold Westphal, *Transcendence and Self-Transcendence: On God and the Soul* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 145.
- 119 *Ibid.*
- 120 *Ibid.*, pp. 168, 172.
- 121 Jean-Luc Marion, *The idol and distance: five studies* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. xviii.
- 122 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 123 John Milbank, *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. 37. For another account of what is at stake between Barth and Milbank, see Neil Ormerod, “Milbank and Barth: A Catholic Perspective,” in *Karl Barth—A Future for Postmodern Theology?*, edited by Christiaan Mostert and Geoff Thompson (Adelaide: Australian Theological Forum, 2000).
- 124 John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, and Graham Ward, *Radical Orthodoxy: a new theology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 33 n1. Here Milbank critiques Barth’s interpretation of Kant as the basis of his anti-philosophical attitudes.
- 125 Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, p. 50.
- 126 Stanley Hauerwas, *With the Grain of the Universe: The Church’s Witness and Natural Theology: Being the Gifford Lectures Delivered at the University of St. Andrews in 2001* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2001), p. 189, referencing Milbank, *The Word Made Strange*, pp. 36–52. I would suggest that Hauerwas is right and that Milbank and Barth have far more in common than Milbank’s citations of Barth would lead his readers to believe.
- 127 Robert W. Jenson, *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York, NY: Nelson, 1963), p. 140, cited in Fergus Kerr, “Karl Barth’s Christological Metaphysics,” in *Immortal Longings: Versions of Transcending Humanity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), p. 193 n90.