

The “Logic” of Faith Seeking Understanding: A Propaedeutic for Anselm’s *Proslogion*

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In the Preface and chapter 1 of the *Proslogion*, Anselm readies us for the well-known argument in chapters 2–4 based on the thought of God¹ as “something than which nothing greater can be thought” (henceforth, “the Argument”). The Argument’s appeal, however, may tempt a reader of the *Proslogion* to pass over Anselm’s preparatory measures and jump directly into chapter 2. Many have fallen for this temptation, which has led, for example, to the claim that what Anselm does in chapters 2–4 is an “ontological argument”—a somewhat anachronistic identification owing too much to post-medieval ways of thinking. At the very least, such an interpretation treats the Argument apart from the context in which Anselm artfully places it. In fact, chapter 1 is the longest chapter of the work, and yet, as Anselm

1. Because in the Preface of the *Proslogion* Anselm makes it clear that he received a cogitatio (“thought”) that he attempts to unfold in the rest of the work (see *Proslogion, Prooemium* [93:13–19]), I refer to the *id quo maius cogitari non potest* (“something than which nothing greater can be thought”) as a “thought” of God. (Citations from Anselm’s works in this paper are from *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, Vol. I, ed. F. S. Schmitt [Stuttgart: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, 1968]. Page number(s), and line number(s) of this volume are indicated in parentheses. All translations are mine.) “Thought” works as a translation of *cogitatio* in part because it does not connote determinateness in the way that “concept” or “idea” or the like might. Anselm does not want the *id quo maius cogitari non potest* to be a notion in which the mind rests. Rather, it should spur one on; by pondering it, one is pushed closer toward a truer apprehension of God, because thinking this thought aligns one’s intelligence more and more with the divine reality. (In this regard, a more active rendering like “thinking” might be better for *cogitatio*, but it would be too awkward in English.) One piece of evidence that Anselm does not want the reader to rest in this *cogitatio* is that he offers four different articulations of it in chapter 2 of the *Proslogion*: *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest* (101:5), *id quo maius cogitari nequit* (101:15–16); *id quo maius cogitari non potest* (101:18); and *aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet* (102:2–3). It seems to me, moreover, that in calling *id quo maius cogitari non potest* a *cogitatio*, Anselm also has in mind Augustine’s account of *credere*, “believing,” as *cogitare cum assensione*, “thinking with assent” (e.g., *De praedestinatione sanctorum*, II.5 (PL 44, 964): *Quoniam et ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare*). For more on Anselm’s notion of *cogitatio*, especially its connection to *meditatio*, see R. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1990), 77–80, 129–32.

Stolz observed over thirty years ago, it is frequently overlooked. “Strange to say,” Stolz says, “this [first, programmatic chapter] is almost never considered by Anselm’s interpreters. At best they see here a general introduction in elevated and poetic language. Even Barth grants it little attention, and takes it merely as a ‘long introductory invocation.’ Actually, however, this chapter outlines the plan of the whole work, and the ideas which Anselm worked out here continually reappear in his writings.”² On this score, unfortunately, little has changed since Stolz wrote these words. Stolz himself supports his claim in general terms, but he never offers a detailed analysis of chapter 1.³ The aim of this paper, then, is to attend closely to the Preface and chapter 1 of the *Proslogion* with a view to showing how Anselm disposes his reader to encounter the Argument as well as the rest of the work.⁴

The opening sections of the *Proslogion* make it clear that the work is Anselm’s methodical articulation of a singular intellectual and spiritual event that engaged and pleased his restless heart and with which he intends to engage and please our hearts.⁵ In my analysis of these sections, therefore, I attempt

2. A. Stolz, “Anselm’s Theology in the *Proslogion*,” in: *The Many-faced Argument*, ed. J. Hick and A. McGill (New York: MacMillan, 1967), 187. Stolz’s reference in this passage is to Karl Barth, *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*, trans. I. Robertson (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1960), 13. Stolz refers to Barth because he sees that although Barth did much to militate against reading chapters 2–4 as containing an “ontological argument,” he still failed to recognize the importance of the first chapter.

3. Perhaps the most extensive analysis of chapter 1 is in G. Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic* (West Lafayette: Purdue U Press, 1994), 97–112, although he focuses primarily on the images and themes of the chapter rather than the “logic” or pattern of thinking found therein, as I intend to do.

4. In light of these comments, then, I focus here not on the work of those who jump to chapters 2–4 and read it as an “ontological argument,” but on the work of those who treat the *Proslogion* as an organic whole, especially those who recognize the Preface and chapter 1 as preparatory in some way for what follows. I refer the reader to M. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1983), in which she offers a comprehensive survey of “the conflicting interpretations of Anselm which the anachronistic presuppositions of recent scholarship have provided” (59). Though written almost 30 years ago, the basic classifications of the interpretations that she outlines are still valid today.

5. Anselm is not forthcoming about any of the works that inspired the *Proslogion*, but I would suggest Augustine’s unfolding of his mystical experience with Monica at Ostia (described in *Confessions* IX.10) in book X of the *Confessions* as a model for Anselm’s methodical articulation of a singular intellectual and spiritual event in the *Proslogion*. This is not the only way in which the *Proslogion* echoes the *Confessions* (as well as other works by Augustine), although it is not practicable to do all the soundings here. (F. Schmitt goes a long way in doing the soundings in the notes of his edition of the *Proslogion* in the *Opera Omnia*.) In *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, and Dante* (Washington: The Catholic U of America Press, 2006), R. McMahon points to structural similarities in the *Confessions* and the *Proslogion* from a literary perspective, while R. Southern convincingly shows how Augustine influenced not only Anselm’s thought, but also his “style” or mode of expression (see *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 71–87). For evidence of such influence relevant specifically to the

to delineate the essential contours of this experience, an approach that involves following paths of Anselm's thinking that he only hints at or explores partially.⁶ In the Preface, Anselm recounts the events that led to his writing the *Proslogion* and lays out the basic structure of the work; in chapter 1, he traces out a self-reflective meditation in which we readers are encouraged to participate. By means of these preparations, Anselm achieves two ends: he places us in an intellectual setting appropriate for the treatment of God in the subsequent chapters, and he establishes the "logic" or pattern of thinking to be employed in that treatment. The second of these is the primary focus of this paper, although the two ends are not altogether separable.

In this paper, then, I intend to show how Anselm establishes the pattern of thinking in the *Proslogion* in these preparatory sections. I will do so in three steps. First, I consider some crucial points in the Preface that elucidate the sort of project Anselm undertakes in the *Proslogion*, especially as compared to the *Monologion* (section I). Second, I provide a detailed account of the pattern of thinking laid out in the self-reflective meditation in chapter 1 (section II). Third, I suggest how that pattern of thinking is present in the remainder of the work (section III). I conclude, finally, with a brief reflection on the significance of this pattern of thinking in our human attempt to come to grips with the reality of God.

thought of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought," see M. Corbin, "La signification de l'unum argumentum du *Proslogion*," *Anselm Studies* 2 (1988): 201–28. It should be noted that in the Prologue of the *Monologion* (8:8–20), Anselm explicitly acknowledges his debt to Augustine, especially to the *De Trinitate*. For a more general examination of Augustine's influence on Anselm, see G. Matthews, "Anselm, Augustine, and Platonism," in *A Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2004), 61–83.

6. Although I am wary to call my approach here "phenomenological," given the various connotations of this word, and although I think Schufreider's approach bespeaks too much "idealism," I nonetheless see similarities between my interpretive approach in this essay and his in *Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, which he describes as follows: "Rather than simply approaching Anselm's argument logically or reconstructing it historically, we will also make an attempt to analyze it phenomenologically. As a methodology designed to provide essential descriptions of concrete experience, phenomenology should offer us access to the experiential aspect of ideas and, in so doing, allow us to explicate certain thoughts in terms of the 'lived experience' a thinker would undergo in thinking them through. In so attempting to characterize one's own concrete experience—including one's cognitive experience—in terms of its essential elements, we will be trying to draw attention to the structural features of those inner experiences invoked by ideas as such, attending to the sort of mental phenomena that are at issue in the event of thinking certain thoughts" (8). I am more inclined to call my interpretive approach "experiential" or "empirical," taken in a broad sense, inasmuch as I am attempting to return to the details of these opening sections of the *Proslogion* in order to elucidate the essential structural components of the actual experience that led to Anselm's writing the work and in which he hopes his reader can share. Another way to put this is to say that I am interpreting the *Proslogion* prospectively rather than retrospectively by entering into its intellectual movement and trying to see what Anselm sees at any given point in the text.

Owing not only to the length of chapter 1 relative to the other chapters in the work, but also to its crucial propaedeutic character, the task of section II receives the most attention. At this point, therefore, it may be helpful to offer a brief sketch of how I view this chapter in itself and in its relation to the subsequent chapters. Now, Anselm's primary aim in the meditation he offers in chapter 1 is to come to grips with his own all-too-human existence, that is, to unify and make intelligible the distended sort of being that upon self-reflection he articulates himself to be. Chapter 1, therefore, does not bear directly on Anselm's chief aim in the *Proslogion*, which is to gain insight into God and unfold the divine nature as best he can; it is, rather, introductory in character. Yet chapter 2, where Anselm begins the Argument, opens with the word *ergo*, "therefore," which signals logical continuity with chapter 1's *excitatio mentis ad contemplandum Deum*, "rousing of the mind toward contemplating God."⁷ Among other things, this continuity consists in Anselm's carrying the pattern of thinking established in chapter 1 over into the subsequent chapters. In chapter 1, Anselm seeks to gain insight into his own existence; in the subsequent chapters, Anselm seeks to gain insight into the God who provides intelligibility to Anselm's own existence as well as the existence of all other things. In chapter 1, Anselm's seeking achieves for him a perspective on his existence whereby he sees the grounds of its intelligibility in the image of God created in him; in subsequent chapters, Anselm's seeking achieves for him a perspective whereby he glimpses more and more "something than which nothing greater can be thought" in all its height, breadth, and depth as the grounds of intelligibility of reality as a whole. The "logic" or pattern of thinking in both cases is that of trust-based intellectual striving toward insight—in other words, *fides quaerens intellectum*, "faith seeking understanding." This phrase was Anselm's original title for the *Proslogion* and, of course, a central principle in his intellectual labors. An examination of the opening sections of the *Proslogion*, especially chapter 1, thus elucidates the "logic" or pattern of thinking involved in faith seeking understanding and so should help clarify how this principle operates as a pathway toward the truth concerning both ourselves and God.

I. THE GENESIS OF THE *PROSLOGION*

Prior to writing the *Proslogion*, Anselm published the *Monologion*,⁸ a work undertaken in order to appease his exacting brother monks who even set forth

7. This is Anselm's title of chapter 1. See *Proslogion*, Capitula (95:2); I (97:3).

8. For more on the connection between the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion*, see: G. Evans, *Anselm and Talking About God* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978), 39–66; Colish, *The Mirror of Language*, 90–109; R. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 113–37; T. Holopainen, *Dialectic and Theology in the Eleventh Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 119–55, and "The

the form they wanted Anselm's meditation on God to take. According to the Prologue of the *Monologion*, they demanded that "[a]ltogether nothing in it should be urged by the authority of Scripture; rather, in a plain style and by common arguments and simple disputation, whatever the conclusion should assert through the individual investigations, both the necessity of reason should compel briefly and the clarity of truth should show openly."⁹ The *Monologion* apparently contented Anselm's fellow monks and others; for, contrary to his hope, they made many copies of it and thus commended the work to long remembrance.¹⁰

Anselm's own heart, however, remained restless, as is evident from his words in the Preface of the *Proslogion*:

Considering [the *Monologion*] to be something woven together by the chaining of many arguments, I began to seek within myself if perhaps one argument could be come upon that for proving itself would need nothing other than itself alone, and alone would suffice to build toward that God truly is, and that he is the highest good who needs no other and whom all things need so that they may be and be well,¹¹ and whatever we believe about the divine substance.¹²

Proslogion in Relation to the *Monologion*," *Heythrop Journal* 50 (2009): 590–602; E. Sweeney, "The Rhetoric of Prayer and Argument in Anselm," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38 (2005): 355–78.

9. *Cuius scilicet scribenda meditationis magis secundum suam voluntatem quam secundum rei facilitatem aut meam possibilitatem hanc mihi formam prestituerunt: quatenus auctoritate scripture penitus nihil in ea persuaderetur, sed quidquid per singulas investigationes finis assereret, id ita esse plano stilo et vulgaribus argumentis simplicique disputatione et rationis necessitas breviter cogeret et veritatis claritas patenter ostenderet. Voluerunt etiam, ut nec simplicibus peneque fatuis obiectionibus mihi occurrentibus obviare contemnerem* (*Monologion*, Prologus [7:5–12]).

10. . . . *nescio tamen quo pacto sic præter spem evenit, ut non solum predicti fratres, sed et plures alii scripturam ipsam quisque sibi eam transcribendo in longum memoria commendare satagerent* (*Monologion*, Prologus [8:5–7]).

11. With this phrase Anselm already hints at the metaphysical structure of reality as *esse et esse bene* ("being and well-being"). I call attention to this here because further on I argue that seeing this metaphysical structure of reality is crucial for understanding the pattern of thinking in the *Proslogion*.

12. . . . *considerans illud esse multorum concatenatione contextum argumentorum, coepi mecum quaerere, si forte posset inveniri unum argumentum, quod nullo alio ad se probandum quam se solo indigeret et solum ad astruendum quia deus vere est, et quia est summum bonum nullo alio indigens, et quo omnia indigent ut sint et ut bene sint, et quaecumque de divina credimus substantia, sufficeret* (*Proslogion*, Prooemium [9:3–10]). For more on how the events leading to Anselm's writing the *Proslogion*, see Eadmer's *Vita Sancti Anselmi*, III.26 (PL 158, 63A–64A). The difference between the reasons why Anselm wrote the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* is captured concisely by Evans: "[Anselm] wrote the *Monologion* at the request of his brothers. The *Proslogion* he wrote for his own satisfaction (*coepi mecum quaerere*). His own sense of dissatisfaction was the mover here, not his brothers' requests for another treatise like the first" (*Anselm and Talking About God*, 40).

Turning his thinking to this daunting task, Anselm experienced an interior ebb and flow: at times that which he was seeking seemed within grasp; at times it fled the acuteness of his mind altogether. Despairing, he willed to cease inquiring after a thing that was not able to be come upon.¹³ Then Anselm tells us:

But, although I was willing to close off that thought altogether from myself—lest by occupying my mind in vain it impede me from other things in which I could make progress—then more and more it began with a certain importunity to bear itself upon me, who was willing against it and fending it off. Therefore, on a certain day, although I was growing tired by vehemently resisting its importunity, in the very conflict of thoughts that of which I had despaired offered itself in such a way that I was eagerly embracing the thought that I had been anxiously pushing away.¹⁴

Thereafter Anselm decides to write the *Proslogion*, “reckoning,” he says, “that what I was pleased to have come upon, if it were written, would be pleasing to someone reading it.”¹⁵

In the *Proslogion*, then, Anselm understands himself to be operating differently than he does in the *Monologion*. In the earlier work he acts “in the person of one investigating things he does not know by reasoning silently with himself,”¹⁶ whereas in the later work he acts “under the person of one endeavoring to straighten up his mind toward contemplating God and seeking to understand what he believes.”¹⁷ This difference in roles is also implied in the

13. *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 (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:10–13]).*

14. *Sed cum illam cogitationem, ne mentem meam frustra occupando ab aliis in quibus proficere possem impediret, penitus a me vellem excludere: tunc magis ac magis nolenti et defendenti se coepit cum importunitate quadam ingerere. Cum igitur quadam die vehementer eius importunitati resistendo fatigarer, in ipso cogitationum conflictu sic se obtulit quod desperaveram, ut studiose cogitationem amplecterer, quam sollicitus repellebam (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:13–19]).*

15. *Aestimans igitur quod me gaudebam invenisse, si scriptum esset, alicui legenti placitum . . . (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:20–21]).* Hence, as W. Hankey rightly notes in “*Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm’s Proslogion*,” *Dionysius* 27 (2009): 145–54, the motivation behind Anselm’s writing the *Proslogion* differs importantly from the one behind his writing the *Monologion*: “. . . the *unum argumentum*, rather than the brethren, nag him in the *Proslogion* and, whereas, in the first, he must be compelled by others to write, in the second work, he wishes to share the joy his discovery brings by writing out the argument” (148).

16. *Postquam opusculum quoddam velut exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei cogentibus me precibus quorundam fratrum in persona alicuius tacite secum ratiocinando quae nesciat investigantis edidi . . . (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:2–3]).* In the *Monologion* itself, Anselm describes his role there as follows: *Quaecumque autem ibi dixi, sub persona secum sola cogitatione disputantis et investigantis ea quae prius non animadvertisset, prolata sunt, sicut sciebam eos velle quorum petitioni obsequi intendebam (Monologion, Prologus [8:18–20]).*

17. . . . *de hoc ipso et de quibusdam aliis sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contem*

original titles of these works: the earlier one was originally called *Exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei* (*An Example of Meditating on the Reason of Faith*); the later one, *Fides quaerens intellectum* (*Faith Seeking Understanding*). Anselm says he gave these titles to the works in order to invite those into whose hands they came to read them,¹⁸ although he did not append his own name as their author. Later, however, he was urged by an archbishop and others to acknowledge his authorship publicly. “In order that this happen fittingly,” Anselm concludes the Preface, “I have named the former *Monologion*, that is, soliloquy, and the latter *Proslogion*, that is, allocution.”¹⁹

There is much to ponder in this Preface. Here, however, I consider just three points relevant to understanding the character of Anselm’s project in the *Proslogion*. The first concerns the sort of achievement that the *Proslogion* intends to recount. According to Anselm’s narrative, the troublesome thought of God—articulated for the first time at the beginning of chapter 2 as *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* (“something than which nothing greater can be thought”)²⁰—was born of a spirited struggle, one that led him even to the brink of despair.²¹ When this struggle reached its conclusion, Anselm wrote the *Proslogion* in order to please the reader in the way that Anselm himself had been pleased. From Anselm’s narrative in the Preface, it appears that the pleasure of which he speaks comes from achieving a difficult good, not from possessing some present and easy good. In addition, Anselm indicates that the final step in attaining this thought was ultimately not his own doing; rather, he recounts, “in the very conflict of thoughts that of which I had despaired so *offered itself* that I was eagerly embracing the thought that I had been anxiously pushing away.”²² After his striving came a gift—in this

plandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripsi opusculum (*Proslogion, Prooemium* [93:21–94:2]).

18. *Et quoniam nec istud nec illud cuius supra memini dignum libri nomine aut cui auctoris praeponebatur nomen iudicabam, nec tamen eadem sine aliquo titulo, quo aliquem in cuius manus venirent quodam modo ad se legendum invitarent, dimittenda putabam: unicuique suum dedi titulum, ut prius Exemplum meditandi de ratione fidei, et sequens Fides quaerens intellectum diceretur* (*Proslogion, Prooemium* [94:2–7]).

19. *Quod ut aptius fieret, illud quidem Monologion, id est soliloquium, istud vero Proslogion, id est alloquium, nominavi* (*Proslogion, Prooemium* [94:11–13]).

20. *Proslogion*, II (101:5).

21. Indeed, despair (along with prayer, comparison, and quest) is an important “dynamic power” in the *Proslogion*, as W. Hankey points out. See “*Omnia sunt in te*: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm’s *Proslogion*”: 145–47. As Hankey indicates, descriptions of despair-like attitudes arise again in chapter 18 as Anselm is still struggling in his search for “*quod cum volumus quaerere nescimus, cum quaerimus non invenimus, cum invenimus non est quod quaerimus*” (*Proslogion*, XVIII [114:7–8]).

22. . . . *in ipso cogitationum conflictu sic se obtulit quod desperaveram, ut studiose cogitationem amplecterer, quam sollicitus repellebam* (*Proslogion, Prooemium* [93:17–19], emphasis added).

case, the gift of a thought of God that becomes the keystone of the *unum argumentum* of the *Proslogion*, the single line of reasoning that surpasses the complicated chain of argumentation in the *Monologion*.

Importantly, though, Anselm never rejects the *Monologion*. In fact, as the Preface of the *Proslogion* indicates, the *Monologion* still stands in Anselm's mind as an example of meditating on the reason of faith.²³ The *Proslogion*, then, is the result not of overcoming something evil for the sake of something good, but of a spirited struggle to unify and transcend something good for the sake of something better.²⁴ The *Proslogion* depicts and rationally unfolds this struggle that for Anselm culminated in the gift of that perpetually elusive thought of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought." When moving through the *Proslogion*, therefore, we should be ready—some-what paradoxically—to exercise rational spiritedness while simultaneously being humbly open to the reception of a gift; for this was the complex disposition of Anselm's heart when his struggle reached its conclusion and he achieved insight into God. Indeed, experiencing the tension built into this complex disposition is crucial for seeing as Anselm saw and being pleased as he was pleased, which were his primary intentions in translating this intellectual and spiritual event into a written form.

A second point from the Preface worth noting is the original title of the *Proslogion*, the well-known phrase *Fides quaerens intellectum* (*Faith Seeking Understanding*). Recall that the *Monologion* was originally called *Exemplum meditandi rationem fidei* (*An Example of Meditating on the Reason of Faith*). Comparing these original titles suggests that the *Monologion* is conceived of as manifesting an objective standard against which we can assess our own meditation on the reasonable character of what we hold by faith, whereas the *Proslogion* is intended to embody the activity of faith seeking understanding. Unlike the *Monologion*, in other words, the *Proslogion* is not intended to stand at a distance measuring our activity of faith seeking understanding; in this sense it is not an *exemplum*. Instead, the *Proslogion* is itself the activity of faith seeking understanding in a written form; it epitomizes and logically unfolds such activity—in fact, as Anselm's narrative in the Preface suggests, it unfolds that very activity of faith seeking understanding played out in his spirited struggle for a single line of reasoning concerning God. Moreover, Anselm intends us who read the *Proslogion* to enter into this activity, which

23. Indeed, as Evans remarks, "The *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* are the only works of Anselm's which he himself came to regard as a pair" (*Anselm and Talking About God*, 39).

24. Consider Eadmer's description of Anselm's intentions in writing the *Proslogion*: *Post haec incidit sibi in mentem investigare utrum uno solo et brevi argumento probari posset id quod de Deo creditur et praedicatur: videlicet quod sit aeternus, incommutabilis, omnipotens, ubique totus, incomprehensibilis, justus, pius, misericors, verax, veritas, bonitas, justitia, et nonnulla alia, et quomodo haec omnia in ipso unum sint* (*Vita Sancti Anselmi*, III.26 [PL 158, 63A]).

he indicates by writing the work in the first person.²⁵ We readers can hardly

25. McMahon argues for a clear-cut distinction between Anselm the narrator, a literary figure, and Anselm the author, the historical human being who penned the *Proslogion*. See his *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 159–63. Nothing I have said here necessarily controverts this way of reading the *Proslogion*, but it seems to me that McMahon overemphasizes the distinction. McMahon argues for this first by calling attention to Anselm’s use of *persona* when describing his authorship of the *Proslogion*: . . . *de hoc ipso et de quibusdam aliis sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripsi opusculum (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:21–94:2])*. McMahon comments on this as follows: “‘*Sub persona*’ is an image derived from the theater: ‘under the character,’ even ‘under the mask.’ Anselm the narrator is a dramatic character created by the historical Anselm, the author” (159). McMahon explicates this further by discussing some implications of this way of reading the work, comparing the *Proslogion* to the *Confessions* with respect to this narrator/author distinction, and addressing the meaning of *argumentum* in the Preface.

In light of the Preface of the *Proslogion*, however, I see at least two problems with applying a clear-cut narrator/author distinction to this work. First, it does not appear that *sub persona* (or *in persona*, as Anselm also uses) has the sort of precise dramatic meaning in the Preface as McMahon suggests. To be sure, as I mentioned above, Anselm sees himself as functioning differently in the *Monologion* than in the *Proslogion*. But the fact that he is willing to speak about being *in persona* with respect to the *Monologion* as well (see *Monologion, Prologus [8:18–20]*; *Proslogion, Prooemium [93:2–3]*) suggests that Anselm is not using this phrase in a technical dramatic sense, since the *Monologion* clearly lacks the sort of literary structure that would justify such a distinction. *Sub persona* or *in persona*, then, is probably best read with less precision. Second, this clear-cut narrator/author distinction leads McMahon to push for a meaning of *argumentum* in the Preface that includes the notion of “plot” or “narrative” or “story.” McMahon is right, of course, to see that there is progress and development—and thus a sort of “plot”—in the *Proslogion*, but *argumentum* seems more clearly to have a logical force in the Preface (and in Anselm’s response to Gaunilo) than a literary one. In the Preface Anselm introduces his search for *unum argumentum* in light of the fact that the *Monologion* is *multorum concatenatione contextum argumentorum* (“something woven together by the chaining of many arguments”). It seems odd to suggest that Anselm conceives of the *Monologion* as a chaining of many plots or narratives. Rather, as Holopainen compellingly argues (*Dialectic and Theology in the Eleventh Century*, 133–55), *argumentum* has a logical meaning in the *Proslogion* and in his reply to Gaunilo that Anselm derives from Boethius, a meaning that points us to seeing “something than which nothing greater can be thought” as a unique “middle term” that is behind all that Anselm articulates about God in the *Proslogion*. (For more on the meaning of *argumentum* in the *Proslogion*, see: F. Sontag, “The Meaning of ‘Argument’ in Anselm’s Ontological ‘Proof,’” *Journal of Philosophy* 64 [1967]: 459–86; Evans, *Anselm and Talking About God*, 42–49; I. Logan, *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion: The History of Anselm’s Argument and its Significance Today* [Ashgate: Farnham, 2008], 13–24.)

Despite my objections to McMahon’s clear-cut distinction between Anselm the narrator and Anselm the author, I nonetheless want to agree with a crucial point he makes and demonstrates in connection with this distinction, namely, that readers of the *Proslogion* have to see that progress, greater insight, variations in the meanings of words, and other such characteristics of a “dramatic” work are present in the *Proslogion* and are crucial for understanding it. (See especially McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 174–85.) Although it’s not clear to me that these features demand the sort of clear-cut narrator/author distinction in the work for which McMahon argues, they certainly suggest that Anselm in some sense stands at a distance from the *Proslogion* as an artist who is attending meticulously to the details of his work, thereby enticing his reader to enter into its movement.

avoid putting ourselves in Anselm's shoes, saying what he says and thinking what he thinks. In order to understand the *Proslogion* as Anselm intended, therefore, it will not do to stand apart from it and judge it from afar; rather, we must enter into it with a view to reenacting Anselm's spirited struggle so as to gain the pleasing insight into God that Anselm himself achieved.

A third noteworthy point from the Preface concerns Anselm's final titles of these two works: "I have named the former [i.e., *An Example of Meditating on the Reason of Faith*] *Monologion*, that is, soliloquy, and the latter [i.e., *Faith Seeking Understanding*] *Proslogion*, that is, allocution."²⁶ These Greek-based titles²⁷ indicate that the former work is a "speaking-alone," while the latter is a "speaking-toward" or "speaking-in-relation." Compared to the *Monologion*, therefore, the *Proslogion* brings relationality to the forefront of Anselm's search to understand God.²⁸ In fact, relationality functions in the *Proslogion* in crucial

26. *Quod ut aptius feret, illud quidem Monologion, id est soliloquium, istud vero Proslogion, id est alloquium, nominavi (Proslogion, Prooemium [94:11–13]).*

27. One may wonder why Anselm uses Greek-based names that, in fact, are not even "real" Greek words but appear to have been invented by Anselm himself. One may also wonder why Anselm offers Latin equivalents (which are, in fact, "real" Latin words) for these titles. A couple of reasons suggest themselves to me. One reason may be because the New Testament is written in Greek, and so by means of these Greek-based titles introduced in the *Proslogion* Anselm calls our attention to the Scriptural influence on his thought, especially the New Testament. Now, in the *Proslogion* Anselm does not employ Scripture authoritatively. Unlike the *Monologion*, however, he does not hold back from speaking the words of Scripture in the *Proslogion* in a seemingly natural way, thereby allowing this work to be imbued with Scriptural images, metaphors, and concepts.

Another reason may be that the Greek-based titles suggest a sort of return in Anselm's thought to a use of reason that hearkens back to the intellectual culture of Greece, even if the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* are clearly influenced by Christianity and the Church. In Anselm, one discovers a Christian thinker who is willing to take reason as far as it can go according to its own natural lights. And in the *Proslogion* in particular, one is reminded of the erotic philosophical pursuits of the Greeks. (For more on this, see my "An Erotic Pattern of Thinking in Anselm's *Proslogion*," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 [2011]: forthcoming.) Comparing Anselm to Augustine in this regard, one might wonder whether Augustine would have agreed to write a work like the *Monologion* in accord with the strictures that Anselm's brother monks laid out! Yet, taking Anselm's works as a whole, it is also clear that he is unafraid to acknowledge the Church's tradition and teaching authority, and that he strives to think in accord with and to develop both.

Indeed, the *Proslogion* is a fascinating work in part because it bridges some of the apparent gaps between reason and faith, Athens and Rome, etc. For example, the *Proslogion* is written after the fashion of a prayer, and it uses the language of Scripture profusely; yet in it one finds no arguments from the authority of Scripture. Also, from the things Anselm says in chapters 2–4 of the *Proslogion*, he seems to think that the Argument should be persuasive to non-believers, even though his use of *credimus* near the beginning of chapter 2 (101:3) seems to acknowledge that the thought of God on which the work depends derives in some way from faith. In my opinion, these sorts of tensions built into the *Proslogion* are part of what give it its powerful and enduring character, and so I would suggest that the dual naming of the *Monologion* and the *Proslogion* may be Anselm's way of calling our attention to such tensions.

28. Hankey articulates the difference nicely as follows: "Again, in parallel paradoxes, the

ways. The most evident way is that for the most part Anselm is addressing God directly.²⁹ He is not teaching or lecturing (as he is, one could say, in the *Monologion*); rather, he is witnessing, confessing, praying. He is intimating his own lived experience and understanding of God to the very God whom he seeks to experience and understand. To be sure, Anselm employs logical argumentation in the *Proslogion*; yet he does so not in order to lay out an "objective" or "scientific" account of God, but in order to understand better the one to whom he prays and whom he desires to see.³⁰ By writing in the first person and addressing God in the second person, then, Anselm allows us readers to relate to God himself by participating in a logically articulated prayer that expresses the activity of faith seeking understanding.

Relationality also functions in the *Proslogion* in a more subtle but perhaps more significant way, namely, in the aspect under which Anselm primarily approaches God. This is implied in Anselm's description of what he was seeking after he published the *Monologion*. "I began to seek within myself," he says, "if perhaps one argument could be come upon that for proving itself would need nothing other than itself alone, and alone would suffice to build toward that God truly is."³¹ *Quia deus vere est*, "that God truly is": Anselm

Monologion is a *soliloquium* which is largely devoted to deducing the divine self-othering, the Trinity, whereas the *Proslogion* is an *alloquium* motivated by the desire to be conformed to God who needs nothing other" (*"Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm's Proslogion,"* 148).

29. There are only two exceptions: when Anselm addresses himself at the beginning of chapter 1, in the manner of a self-exhortation (97:4–10); and when he addresses himself at the beginning of chapter 14, in the manner of self-interrogation (111:8–14). Stolz offers helpful insights into the *Proslogion* as an *allocutio* to God that at times speaks about God in the third person, even though clearly Anselm still sees himself as in God's presence addressing him. See Stolz, "Anselm's Theology in the *Proslogion*," 198–204.

30. For more on the significance of the *Proslogion* as a prayer, see: G. Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, 97–112; Y. Cattin, "La prière de S. Anselme dans le *Proslogion*," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 72 (1988): 373–96; M. Adams, "Praying the *Proslogion*: Anselm's Theological Method," in: *The Rationality of Belief* (Ithaca: Cornell U Press, 1995), 13–39; Sweeney, "The Rhetoric of Prayer and Argument in Anselm." Schufreider perhaps captures the unique character of the *Proslogion* most concisely when he calls it "a kind of philosophical prayer book" (*Confessions of a Rational Mystic*, 97).

31. . . . *coepi mecum quaerere, si forte posset inveniri unum argumentum, quod nullo alio ad se probandum quam se solo indigeret et solum ad astruendum quia deus vere est (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:5–7]).* The word *astruendum* ("building toward") is intriguing here. It is usually rendered in English as "proving" or "demonstrating," both of which fail to capture the ongoing character of the activity that *astruendum* connotes. "Building toward" captures this better and makes clearer Anselm's recognition that one is always approaching God and accessing the truth of God in a way that is neither complete nor comprehensive, although one can make progress. More specifically, *astruere* means "to build on in addition" or "to add to," a meaning that should be kept in mind when considering the meaning of *maius* ("greater") in the thought of God as "something

seeks first to build toward the true manner, the manifestness, of God's existence, especially inasmuch as it can be captured in speech that signifies a way of thinking in accord with the reality that God is. This fuller description of Anselm's initial objective in the *Proslogion* makes more sense when seen in light of his understanding of truth laid out in his subsequent work *De veritate*, a dialogue between a teacher and his student trying to illuminate the notion of truth as applicable to God and other things. After discussing the truth of speech acts, opinions, wills, actions, sense perceptions, and beings themselves, the interlocutors arrive at an account of truth as *rectitudo mente sola perceptibilis*, "rightness able-to-be-perceived by the mind alone."³² According to this account, then, something is true inasmuch as it is "right" or "straight" in relation to its end or object, which is determined ultimately by God's intention in having created it as the sort of thing it is. It appears, then, that Anselm's first objective in the *Proslogion*—"to build toward that God truly is"—consists in aligning his thinking with the supremely true reality of God, which entails finding a precise way of signifying such right thinking about the divine in speech. The thought granted to Anselm on the brink of despair, first expressed in chapter 2 as "something than which nothing greater can be thought," is crucial for achieving such right thinking about God; for it helps to unveil that the divine reality "is so truly that it cannot be thought not to be"³³ and that divine existence ever surpasses any thought one can have about it.

In addition, this account of Anselm's first objective in the *Proslogion*, which highlights the relational character of thinking rightly with respect to God's true existence, fits well with Anselm's description of his role in this work, namely, that he is acting "under the person of one endeavoring *to straighten*

than which nothing greater can be thought." Anselm is in the paradoxical position of building toward and adding on to his understanding of something than which nothing greater can be thought, a distinctive mark of which seems to be that it cannot be made greater or cannot be added to. (Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, c. 5 [Leonine ed., XLIII, 378:15–21]: *Nec oportet, si dicimus quod Deus est esse tantum, ut in illorum errorem incidamus qui Deum dixerunt esse illud esse universale quo quelibet res formaliter est. Hoc enim esse quod Deus est huiusmodi conditionis est ut nulla sibi additio fieri possit, unde per ipsam suam puritatem est esse distinctum ab omni esse.*) For a good start—though by no means the last word—on thinking about the meaning of *maius*, see R. Brecher, "'Greatness' in Anselm's Ontological Argument," *Philosophical Quarterly* 24 (1974): 97–105; for a more penetrating analysis, see C. Viola, "La dialectique de la grandeur. Une interprétation du '*Proslogion*,'" *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 37 (1970): 23–55. Consider also Evans's claim that the "axiomatic" notion of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought" captures "the 'a + x-ness' of God" (*Anselm and Talking About God*, 47).

32. See especially *De veritate*, XI (191:19–20).

33. *Sic ergo vere est aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest, ut nec cogitari possit non esse* (*Proslogion*, II [103:1–2]).

up his mind toward contemplating God and seeking to understand what he believes.”³⁴ Anselm’s aim, then, is to determine and align his thinking in accord with the reality that God is, and the means to do so are provided for him initially in the thought of “something than which nothing greater can be thought” offered to him on the brink of despair. In chapter 1, I hope to show in the next section, Anselm prepares himself to achieve this straightening-up of his mind toward contemplating God by means of a prior straightening-up of his mind toward contemplating himself. For by achieving right thinking about himself as a thinking, remembering, loving being created in the image of God, he disposes himself for aligning his thinking with the reality of God.

II. THE “LOGIC” OF FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

After reading the Preface of the *Proslogion*, we may expect Anselm to present immediately the thought of God offered to him on the brink of despair. Instead, chapter 1 faces us with an *excitatio mentis ad contemplandum Deum*, “rousing of the mind toward contemplating God,” and it turns out to be the longest chapter of the work. As was noted above, little attention has been paid to the details of this chapter by interpreters—a fact that may turn out to be surprising if, as I hope to show, its self-reflective meditation establishes the “logic” or pattern of thinking that underlies the Argument as well as the rest of the work. In this section, I offer a detailed account of this meditation. Although this is worth doing in its own right, owing to the meditation’s beauty and the insight it provides into human existence, I analyze it here with an eye to what I am calling the “logic” or pattern of thinking involved in the activity of faith seeking understanding. In this opening chapter Anselm follows this pattern of thinking in order to uncover the deeper truth of his own all-too-human existence, and thereby he lays a foundation for the subsequent chapters that build toward the truth of divine existence.

Before delving into the meditation itself, it is worth touching briefly on Anselm’s characterization of chapter 1 as an *excitatio*, which helps us understand his intentions in this opening chapter. *Excitatio* can mean both a rhetorical exhortation to do something and an act of awakening someone who is sleeping,³⁵ and both meanings elucidate Anselm’s purposes. In this meditation, Anselm certainly exhorts us by appealing to both our reason and our emotions. Anselm displays his rhetorical skill: his abilities to write beautifully, to structure his thinking intelligently, to employ effective im-

34. ... *sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripti opusculum (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:21–94:2], emphasis added).*

35. “Rousing” captures both meanings in English, which is why I prefer it here as a rendering for *excitatio*.

ages and metaphors, and to elicit our *pathos*. Chapter 1 thus appeals to the “heart” (*cor*),³⁶ man’s existential center, the primal source of cognitivity and affectivity unique to every person. By engaging our intellects and imaginations, our wills and desires, Anselm persuades us intellectually and inspires us emotionally—or, more precisely, moves each of us as a whole, cognitively and affectively—toward the loving contemplation of God.³⁷ As a rhetorical exhortation that appeals on both rational and emotional levels, therefore, chapter 1 is clearly an *excitatio*.

Anselm also awakens the reader in chapter 1; he causes a transition in our cognizance of God analogous to a shift from unconscious sleep to rationally engaged wakefulness. Thus Anselm’s characterization of chapter 1 as an *excitatio* points to the mysterious experience of being awakened. What exactly takes place when we are awakened? Neither speaking a person’s name nor tapping him on the shoulder makes the one who is sleeping rational, and yet such acts do trigger his reentry into a sensitive and intellectual awareness of the surrounding world. While the sleeper sleeps, that same world is there to be sensed and thought, and although the sleeper is present in the world, he is not engaged with it. The act of awakening reengages him with the world and makes him cognizant of a reality that was there all along. By characterizing the meditation in chapter 1 as an *excitatio*, therefore, Anselm suggests that contemplating God in some way lies beneath the surface of human thinking, especially our self-reflective activity, and we need to be made conscious of his enduring presence there. As I hope to show, Anselm ultimately achieves this in chapter 1 through an act of faith seeking understanding whereby he asserts the image of God created in us as a unifying principle that makes intelligible our existence as distended thinking-remembering-loving beings. Hence,

36. The word *cor* shows up five times in chapter 1, and each use points to a different aspect of it. The heart can speak (95:9; cf. Psalm 26:8), be taught (98:1), have a groan (99:13; cf. Psalm 37:9), be embittered (99:22), and believe and love (100:17). And in chapters 2–4, the heart is, of course, the place where the fool speaks his denial of God’s existence (101:6, 103:9, 103:15–18 [6x], and 104:1; cf. Psalm 13:1 and 52:1).

Now, Anselm does not offer a strict definition of the “heart” in the *Proslogion*, but from these passages and others, one can gather what he means by the “heart” in light of its manifold objects and activities. One could say, then, that for Anselm the heart is the individual human being’s capacity or aptitude for encountering, being drawn by, and responding from within to being itself in terms of its truth, goodness, and beauty (as well as the apparent lack of truth, goodness, and beauty). It is the human being’s deepest interiority—his “inmost being” (*intima*) (see *Proslogion*, XXV [120:3])—that is nonetheless on display to one degree or another in all that one does. It is the place of personal communion, especially with God. When reading the *Proslogion*, then, it is important to keep in mind that Anselm intends the meditation in chapter 1 and the argument in the remainder of the work to be operative in the realm of the heart.

37. M. Adams is right, then, to articulate Anselm’s understanding of human inquiry as “holistic.” See “Faith and Reason,” in: *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 2004), 132–56 (especially 152).

insofar as he awakens us to this image of God created in us and, indirectly, to God himself, the meditation in chapter 1 is aptly called an *excitatio*.³⁸

38. This consideration of chapter 1 as an awakening brings to mind the opening paragraphs of Augustine’s *Confessions*, where Augustine’s puzzles over the fact that God is always present and yet Augustine is not aware of him (see *Confessions*, I.1–2). Anselm recapitulates this same puzzlement in the second paragraph of chapter 1 (see *Prosligion*, *Prooemium* [98:1–15]). For a helpful exploration of this, see R. Sokolowski, *The God of Faith and Reason* (Washington: The Catholic U of America Press, 1982), 1–12.

Furthermore, Anselm’s use of the word *excitatio* to describe chapter 1 connects it with book VIII of the *Confessions*. (Evans also notes a connection with this book of the *Confessions*, but says nothing more about it [see *Anselm and Talking About God*, 41, n. 2].) Augustine’s first use of the verb *excitare* in the *Confessions* occurs in book VIII, the crucial book in which Augustine describes the last stages of his conversion, and he uses the verb three times in that book. The first time is near the beginning of the book when he petitions God for help: *Age, domine, fac excita et revoca nos, accende et rape, fragra, dulcesce: amemus, curramus. Nonne multi ex profundiore Tartaro caecitatis quam Victorinus redeunt ad te et accedunt et illuminantur recipientes lumen, quod si qui recipiunt, accipiunt a te potestatem, ut filii tui fiant* (*Confessions*, VIII.4.9 [Loeb ed., 420, emphasis added]). Echoes of this passage are present in chapter 1 of the *Prosligion*, especially in Anselm’s references to divine light and sweetness. See, e.g., *Prosligion*, *Prooemium* (98:3–6; 99:22–23).

The second and third times Augustine uses *excitare* are close together later in book VIII, and they also shed light on Anselm’s project in the *Prosligion*. The second time is when Augustine alludes to what his reading of Cicero’s *Hortensius* achieved for him twelve years previous to his final conversion: *Tunc vero quanto ardentius amabam illos, de quibus audiebam salubres affectus, quod se totos tibi sanandos dederant, tanto execrabilius me comparatum eis oderam, quoniam multi mei anni mecum effluerant, forte duodecim anni, ex quo ab undevicesimo anno aetatis meae lecto Ciceronis Hortensio excitatus eram studio sapientiae et differebam contempta felicitate terrena ad eam investigandam vacare, cuius non inventio, sed vel sola inquisitio iam praeponenda erat etiam inventis thesauris regnisque gentium et ad nutum circumfluentibus corporis voluptatibus* (*Confessions*, VIII.7.17 [Loeb ed., 438, emphasis added]). Reading the *Hortensius* “had excited” Augustine to strive for wisdom, and yet ultimately it did not suffice. Rather, a further *excitatio* led him to make the last steps in the conversion process: *Tum in illa grandi rixa interioris domus meae, quam fortiter excitaveram cum anima mea in cubiculo nostro, corde meo, tam vultu quam mente turbatus invado Alypium, exclamo: ‘quid patimur? quid est hoc, quid audisti? surgunt indocti et caelum rapiunt, et nos cum doctrinis nostris sine corde ecce ubi volutamur in carne et sanguine! an quia praecesserunt, pudet sequi, et non pudet nec saltem sequi?’* (*Confessions*, VIII.8.19 [Loeb ed., 442, emphasis added]). In light of this last passage, it does not seem coincidental that Anselm also begins the *excitatio* in chapter 1 of the *Prosligion* in his “chamber” or “private bedroom” (*cubiculum*), alluding like Augustine to Matthew 6:6.

From these correspondences (as well as from the Preface of the *Prosligion*), one might surmise the following: After writing the *Monologion* Anselm felt himself to be—and perhaps felt that the *Monologion* reader also could be—in a position similar to Augustine prior to his last stage of conversion, namely, as having a philosophic grasp of God, but not yet grasping the meaningfulness of God’s existence for his own life. The *excitatio* in the opening chapter of the *Prosligion* goes a long way toward bridging this cognitive-affective gap. Compared to the *Monologion*, the treatment of God in the *Prosligion* proceeds more patently with an eye toward the relationship between God and human beings. Perhaps, then, Anselm envisioned the *Prosligion* as the kind of rational treatment of God that could dispose one for a deeper conversion, of the “heart” and not just of the “head,” along the lines of the conversion Augustine describes in book VIII of the *Confessions*.

In the remainder of this section, I delineate the pattern of thinking in this opening meditation, which can be articulated in terms of three “moments” of the self-reflecting human being: an inward thinking of the self (first moment), within the context of which there is a remembering of the fallen self (second moment) and a loving of a better self (third moment). Especially in the latter two moments, Anselm recognizes that his own human existence is distended and pulls in different directions, both downward and upward—that is, toward both ill-being (inasmuch as he is fallen) and well-being (inasmuch as he inclines toward a better future). This tension provides the impetus for a concluding act of faith seeking understanding whereby Anselm arrives at an intelligible principle that gathers together his distended existence. As he writes in the concluding paragraph of chapter 1: “I confess, Lord, and I give thanks, because you have created in me this your image, that remembering you, I may think you, may love you.”³⁹ By asserting the image of God created in him, Anselm transcends the dimensions of his distended existence and uncovers a deeper principle of his being that makes sense of the thinking-remembering-loving subject he experiences himself to be.

I analyze this meditation in three subsections, breaking the six paragraphs of chapter 1 into pairs.⁴⁰ In the first two paragraphs, Anselm establishes the meditation’s setting and goal by urging himself to enter into self-reflection within the framework of a search for God. This is the first moment: an inward thinking of the seeking self. In the third and fourth paragraphs, Anselm articulates the next two moments, namely, a remembering of the fallen self and a loving of the better self. Thus he self-reflects according to a threefold pattern: within the context of inward thinking in the present, Anselm both remembers his fallen self in the past and inclines toward a better self in the future. Anselm paints a self-portrait, then, of a distended, self-reflecting being fraught with inner tension and open to opposing accounts of itself. Finally, in

39. *Fateor, domine, et gratias ago, quia creasti in me hanc imaginem tuam, ut tui memor te cogitem, te amem* (*Proslogion*, I [100:12–13]).

40. I am relying here on the paragraph breaks in the Schmitt edition of the *Proslogion* in *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*. On the basis of his correspondence with Schmitt, however, Stolz notes the following: “[T]he oldest manuscripts [of the *Proslogion*], which go back to Anselm’s time, have a list of chapters with the numbers at the beginning. In the text itself, however, the beginning of each chapter is indicated by the respective number being put in the margin; the repetition of the titles in the text is not original” (“Anselm’s Theology in the *Proslogion*,” 205). McMahon takes this to mean—rightly, I think—that as originally published “the text of the [*Proslogion*] appears as a long, continuous prayer, with the division into twenty-six chapters noted marginally, yet not intrusively” (*Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Anselm, Boethius, and Dante*, 165). Nonetheless, as hopefully the analysis of chapter 1 shows, the paragraph breaks made by Schmitt make sense and are justifiable on the basis of signals and themes in the text itself. For more on the stages of the publication of the *Proslogion* during Anselm’s lifetime, see Holopainen, “The *Proslogion* in Relation to the *Monologion*,” 597–601.

the fifth paragraph Anselm enters into a receptive mode by petitioning God, and in the sixth paragraph he makes a spirited act of faith seeking understanding regarding his own existence. Thereby he gains insight into himself as having the image of God created in him, a conclusion that both resolves the tension Anselm experiences as a distended thinking-remembering-loving being and affords him a glimpse of the God whose image he bears.

In addition, this “logic” of Anselm’s self-reflective meditation uncovers an underlying “metaphysics,” namely, the intelligibility of reality in terms of the nested structure of being-and-well-being. Even though this structure is present in all of reality, it is fitting that Anselm open the *Proslogion* by turning inward, because the very activity of self-reflection discloses this nested structure in himself. For in his self-reflective activity, Anselm is both “himself” and “beyond himself”; he stands outside himself and considers himself, thus being both himself and greater than himself. This metaphysical insight into the intelligible structure of reality is crucial for understanding the Argument and the subsequent chapters. Hence, by providing the “experiential” grounds for this insight, chapter 1 plays a vital propaedeutic role in Anselm’s *Proslogion*.⁴¹

A. Thinking

In the opening lines of chapter 1, Anselm places himself in a setting appropriate for being roused:

Quick, now, little man, flee a short while your occupations, hide yourself a short time from your tumultuous thoughts. Cast off your burdensome cares now, and put off until later your laborious distresses [*distentiones*]. Empty a little bit for God, and rest a little bit in him. ‘Enter into the chamber’ of your mind, close off all things besides God and what may help you in seeking him, and ‘with door closed’ seek him.⁴²

41. Although he does not focus on chapter 1 to do so, H. Wolz also considers the “experiential” basis of Anselm’s argument. See his “The Empirical Basis of Anselm’s Arguments,” *Philosophical Review* 60 (1951): 341–61.

42. *Eia nunc, homuncio, fuge paululum occupationes tuas, absconde te modicum a tumultuosis cogitationibus tuis. Abice nunc onerosas curas, et postpone laboriosas distentiones tuas. Vaca aliquantulum deo, et requiesce aliquantulum in eo. ‘Intra in cubiculum’ mentis tuae, exclude omnia praeter deum et quae te iuvent ad quaerendum eum, et ‘clauso ostio’ quare eum* (*Proslogion*, I [97:4–9]). Anselm alludes here to Matthew 6:6 (as was mentioned above and as Augustine does in *Confessions*, VIII.8.19). Following the Latin text edited by Schmitt, I place these Scriptural allusions in quotation marks, even though I am afraid that this indicates something contrary to Anselm’s intentions, insofar as such marks could suggest a quotation meant to compel the reader by its authoritative status. It seems to me, rather, that Anselm is simply so steeped in Scripture—and, as a monk, steeped especially in the Psalms—that its phrases flow naturally from his pen, much as do echoes of Augustine’s works. (For more on this aspect of Anselm’s writings, see R. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 69–87.) This is not to say that Anselm is unaware of the Scriptural passages to which he alludes. It is to say, rather,

Thus Anselm removes himself to his mind's *cubiculum*—its private chamber or bedroom—and closes the door. Having withdrawn from external things, he resides in the realm of personal inwardness, a realm that belongs uniquely to each person and into which only the self and God can peer. This is the setting of Anselm's *excitatio*: the private interior space wherein he has exclusive access to his thoughts, memories, and volitions. This realm of inward thinking—a realm in which the self is made intelligible—is the framework within which the remainder of the meditation takes place. This opening paragraph concludes with Anselm commanding himself thus: “Speak now, my whole heart, speak now to God: ‘I seek your countenance; your countenance, O Lord, I seek again.’”⁴³ It is within the realm of inward thinking, then, that Anselm's heart can address God and seek the divine countenance.

The second paragraph, like the first, begins, “Now, then ...” (*Eia, nunc* ...). The repetition suggests that the opening paragraph is introductory in character and the second paragraph is a sort of rebeginning. In the first paragraph Anselm withdraws from external things and enters into himself in order to encounter God. That encounter begins in the second paragraph, at least on Anselm's side; for in this paragraph Anselm begins to address God personally, that is, in the second person. In these opening paragraphs, therefore, we discern in Anselm's thinking a typically Augustinian movement from what is outside himself to what is within himself to what is above himself.

Anselm immediately recognizes that the task he set for himself may require divine aid. “Therefore, quick now, you, Lord my God,” he says, “teach my heart where and in what way it may seek you, where and in what way it may come upon you.”⁴⁴ Indeed, Anselm's task is perplexing, which becomes evident to him right away:

Lord, if you are not here, where may I seek you, absent as you are? If, however, you are everywhere, why do I not see you, present as you are? But certainly you dwell in ‘light unapproachable’. And where is light unapproachable? Or in what way may I approach toward light unapproachable? Or who will lead and take me into it so that I may see you in it?⁴⁵

that he does not intend such allusions to be persuasive owing to their authoritative status. Instead, he wants them to be persuasive because they shed light on that which he is describing or explaining. Another way to see it, perhaps is this: in the *Proslogion* (unlike the *Monologion*), Anselm addresses God directly, and he often does so in God's own “tongue,” so to speak, in the “language” that he and God share through Scripture. And by doing so Anselm allows a Biblical vision of both the human being and God to suffuse his activity of faith seeking understanding. 43. *Dic nunc, totum 'cor meum', dic nunc deo: 'Quaero vultum tuum; vultum tuum, domine, requiro'* (*Proslogion*, I [97:9–10]). Anselm alludes to Psalm 28:6.

44. *Eia nunc ergo tu, domine deus meus, doce cor meum ubi et quomodo te quaerat, ubi et quomodo te inveniat* (*Proslogion*, I [98:1–2]).

45. *Domine, si hic non es, ubi te quaeram absentem? Si autem ubique es, cur non video presentem? Sed certe habitas 'lucem inaccessibilem'. Et ubi est lux inaccessibilis? Aut quomodo accedam ad lucem*

Here Anselm makes his first declaration concerning God, that he dwells in unapproachable light. The declaration is both affirmative and negative, depicting God as unknowably knowable. God is knowable; he dwells in “light.” Yet human cognitive access to him is restricted; the light in which he dwells is “unapproachable.” Approaching God directly, therefore, is not practicable, and so Anselm considers an alternative route. “Hence, by which signs, by what face, will I seek you?” he asks. “Never have I seen you, Lord my God, nor have I known your face.”⁴⁶ To approach God by means of a sign or a face is to approach him indirectly. It is to get at God from the “outside,” from the way he appears “on the surface” of things. But what can serve as an adequate sign of God for us human seekers? This question hovers over the meditation until its concluding lines.

Anselm concludes the second paragraph by stepping back and recapitulating his present status:

What, most high Lord, what will this your far-away exile do? What will your servant do, anxious with love of you and cast forth ‘from your face’? He pants to see you and your face is very absent from him. He desires to approach toward you and your dwelling is unapproachable. He yearns to come upon you and he does not know your place. He longs to seek you and he knows not your countenance. Lord, you are my God and you are my Lord, and never have I seen you. You made and remade me and you brought all goods of mine together for me, and not yet have I known you. In sum, I was made for seeing you and not yet have I made that on account of which I was made.⁴⁷

inaccessibilem? Aut quis me ducet et inducet in illam, ut videam te in illa? (*Proslogion*, I [98:2–6]). Anselm alludes here to I Timothy 6:16. These lines bear a striking resemblance to *Confessions* I.2–3, which in turn may be fruitfully compared with Plato’s *Meno*, where Socrates presents a different but related difficulty, namely, how one is able to seek that which one does not know. It is also worth mentioning that God’s dwelling in unapproachable light comes up again at the beginning of chapter 16, immediately following the crucial transitional chapter 15. For more on the important connections to the *Meno* problem, see Hankey, “*Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm’s Proslogion*,” 147–48.

46. *Deinde quibus signis, qua facie te queram? Numquam te vidi, domine deus meus, non novi faciem tuam* (*Proslogion*, I [98:6–7]).

47. *Quid faciet, altissime domine, quid faciet iste tuus longinquus exsul? Quid faciet servus tuus anxius amore tui et longe proiectus ‘a facie tua’? Anhelat videre te, et nimis abest illi facies tua. Accedere ad te desiderat, et inaccessibleis est habitatio tua. Invenire te cupit, et nescit locum tuum. Quarere te affectat, et ignorat vultum tuum. Domine, deus meus es, et dominus meus es, et numquam te vidi. Tu me fecisti et refecisti, et omnia mea bona tu mihi contulisti, et nondum novi te. Denique ad te videndum factus sum, et nondum feci propter quod factus sum* (*Proslogion*, I [98:7–15]). Anselm alludes here to Psalm 50:13. Though a bit awkward in English, rendering the verb *facere* as a form of “make” all three times in the last sentence of this passage captures Anselm’s expression of a possible continuity—and thus a possible, sinful discontinuity—of his own making or doing with his having been made by God.

The last statement of the second paragraph both sums up how Anselm sees himself in the first moment of this self-reflective meditation and transitions him to the next two moments. In this first moment of inward thinking, Anselm recognizes that he has come from somewhere and is headed toward somewhere. At the end of this first moment, therefore, Anselm stands in a middle place, searching for God and looking forward and backward.⁴⁸ The *nondum*, “not yet,” is significant; it indicates Anselm’s recognition that he is made but not yet fully made. He is *in via*, “on the way,” a *peregrinus*. His having been made points him backward to the past, while his not yet having made that for which he was made points him forward to the future. These past and future moments of his distended existence and the tension to which they give rise become thematic in the ensuing paragraphs.

B. REMEMBERING AND LOVING

The third paragraph, which initiates the next moment of Anselm’s self-reflective meditation, opens thus:

O pitiful lot of man, since he has lost that for which he was made! O how hard and hideous that fall! Alas, what he lost and what he came upon, what withdrew and what remained! He lost the blessedness for which he was made, and he came upon a pitifulness on account of which he was not made.⁴⁹

In the context of inward thinking, Anselm recalls his fallenness. He sees himself in light of what he could have been. He remembers that he is not that which he was made to be, and this is owing to a fall that has effected a void or emptiness in him.

Anselm knows, of course, that he is not alone in this state. Indeed, he is describing the human condition in general:

It withdrew, that without which there is nothing happy, and it remained, that which in itself is only pitiful. Then ‘man was eating the bread of angels,’ for which now he hungers; now he eats ‘the bread of sorrows,’ which then he did not know. Alas, the common grief of men, the universal lament of the sons of Adam! He was belching with satiety; we sigh with hunger. He was overflowing; we beg. He was happily possessing and pitifully deserted; we are unhappily in need and pitifully desire—and, alas, we remain empty!⁵⁰

48. I am reminded here of the “definition” of reason voiced by Shakespeare’s Hamlet: “What is a man, / If his chief good and market of his time / Be but to sleep and feed? / A beast, no more. / Sure, he that made us with such large discourse / Looking before and after, gave us not / That capability and godlike reason / To fust in us unused” (*Hamlet*, IV.4.35–41).

49. *O misera sors hominis, cum hoc perdidit ad quod factus est. O durus et dirus casus ille! Heu, quid perdidit et quid invenit, quid abscessit et quid remansit! Perdidit beatitudinem ad quam factus est, et invenit miseriam propter quam factus non est* (*Proslogion*, I [98:16–19]).

50. *Abscessit sine quo nihil felix est, et remansit quod per se non nisi miserum est. ‘Manducabat’ tunc ‘homo panem angelorum’ quem nunc esurit, manducat nunc ‘panem dolorum,’ quem tunc*

Anselm describes this universal fallenness in privative terms: being in darkness rather than in light, in exile from a fatherland, and blind with respect to the vision of God for which he was made.⁵¹ Yet this deprived state into which we were changed⁵² appears, nonetheless, to be precisely what makes us poised for something better. “We wretched ones,” Anselm asks, “whence are we pushed out, where are we pushed toward?”⁵³ Having been pushed from something, we are pushed toward something else; having lost blessedness, we are in search of it. The lack of a better condition that we can recall or imagine seems to orient and propel us toward fulfillment.

This second moment of looking backward to a past fall passes fittingly into a third moment of inclining forward to a better future. Anselm articulates this connection more fully in the fourth paragraph:

Toward what was I stretching, from what have I come? What thing am I sighing for, what things am I sighing over? ‘I sought good things’ and, behold, trouble! I was stretching toward God and I ran into myself. I was seeking rest in my hidden place, and ‘I came upon tribulation and sorrow’ in my inmost places. I willed to laugh from the joy of my mind, and I am forced to bellow ‘from the groaning of my heart.’ Gladness was hoped for, and, behold, from there sighs are multiplied together.⁵⁴

Anselm inclines toward a better future, but such improvement is not assured owing to his fallen self into which he keeps running. A better future appears unattainable, then, because of the fallen condition of which Anselm is constantly reminded. He keeps “running into himself,” unable to reach on his own that toward which he is inclined.

Up to this point in chapter 1, then, Anselm has traced out the following pattern of self-reflection: within a context of an inward thinking of himself—a context that brings the intelligibility of the self to the fore—he remembers his fallenness, which in turn brings to light his inclination toward a better future unattainable on his own. This succinct self-narrative involves Anselm’s

nesciebat. Heu publicus luctus hominum, universalis planctus filiorum Adae! Ille ructabat saturitate, nos suspiramus esurie. Ille abundabat, nos mendicamus. Ille feliciter tenebat et misere deseruit, nos infeliciter egemus et miserabiliter desideramus, et heu, vacui remanemus (Proslogion, I [98:19–25]). Anselm alludes here to Psalms 77:25 and 126:2.

51. *Quare sic nobis obseravit lucem, et obduxit nos tenebris? Ut quid nobis abstulit vitam, et inflixit mortem? Aerumnosi, unde sumus expulsi, quo sumus impuls! Unde precipitati, quo obrui! A patria in exilium, a visione dei in cecitatem nostram (Proslogion, I [99:2–5]).*

52. *Misera mutatio! De quanto bono in quantum malum! (Proslogion, I [99:6]).*

53. *Aerumnosi, unde sumus expulsi, quo sumus impuls! (Proslogion, I [99:3–4]).*

54. *Quo tendebam, quo deveni? Ad quid aspirabam, in quibus suspiro? ‘Quasivi bona,’ et ecce turbatio! Tendebam in deum, et offendi in me ipsum. Requiem quarebam in secreto meo, et ‘tribulationem et dolorem inveni’ in intimis meis. Volebam videre a gaudio mentis meae, et cogor rugire ‘a gemitu cordis mei.’ Sperabatur letitia, et ecce unde densentur suspiria! (Proslogion, I [99:9–14]).* Anselm alludes here to Psalm 121:9, Jeremiah 14:19, Psalm 114:3, and Psalm 37:9.

recognition of the relative goodness of the moments of his distended self as both fallen and loving. In remembering his fallenness, Anselm recognizes himself to be worse off than he was or at least can imagine himself to be, which suggests that the structure of his existence is “being-and-ill-being” whose proper movement is from a condition relatively better to one relatively worse. This intelligible structure of human existence is the contrary—a “photographic negative,” as it were—of “being-and-well-being” whose proper movement is from a condition relatively worse to one relatively better. The intelligible structure of being-and-well-being is presupposed by the person who self-consciously inclines toward a better condition in the future—that is, the person who truly hopes. For if a person’s love for a better future is to achieve its end—that is, if that person’s hope is to be fulfilled—it would entail a movement from the condition in which he finds himself to one with a greater degree of goodness.

By looking backward and forward, then, Anselm finds himself in a quandary. He faces contrary accounts of his existence: it has either the structure of being-and-ill-being, as his fallenness suggests, or that of being-and-well-being, as his inclination toward a better condition suggests. These distinctions and relative judgments, moreover, take place within an encompassing moment of inward thinking within which he is attempting to make his own existence intelligible to himself. As long as he stays within that self-contained context, he remains embedded within the very distended dimensions of the story about himself that he is telling—a story temporally conditioned by its present, past, and future moments. Thus embedded, he can interpret his fallenness only as an object of grief and lament, and his future only as possibly meaningful.

In abstract terms, therefore, we can delineate the pattern of Anselm’s thinking in chapter 1’s meditation as follows: Within the context of striving to make a present reality intelligible, Anselm must look both “backwards” or “lower” in order to manifest its worse or lesser aspects and “forward” or “higher” in order to manifest its better or greater aspects; for without looking both “down” and “up” at the full range of this reality, he would be unable to make sense of it as a whole. But looking both up and down brings to light a complexity in the reality in question according to the relative value of its “moments” or “aspects.” A continual thinking of this complexity generates dialectical tension in need of resolution. In order to achieve such a resolution and align his mind with the reality in question—that is, in order to arrive at the deeper truth of this reality—Anselm must come upon a principle that makes intelligible the complex structure of its moments. Such a principle must both embrace and simplify the apparently contrary accounts by seeing them in relation to a deeper dimension as distinct manifestations of a single reality that is more absolute in character.

After the fourth paragraph of chapter 1, then, this is where Anselm is with regard to his own distended existence. Can he find such a principle of his distended existence that can make himself intelligible to himself? Can he step outside the dimensions of his story and behold it within a dimension that embraces that story's moments, thus glimpsing the deeper truth of his existence in a way that resolves the apparent contrariety of his simultaneous fallenness and inclination toward good things to come? To be sure, at this point in the meditation, Anselm could have simply given himself over to the dimensions of his distended existence and remained grieving, restless, and undetermined as to whether life offers despair or hope. For Anselm, though, this is not a real option. Like Pascal, he seems aware that he must wager; it is not voluntary; he is already embarked.⁵⁵ He strives, therefore, to apprehend the truth concerning his existence, which means reaching a horizon of self-understanding within which he can make sense of both his fallenness and his inclination toward a better future. This is, I maintain, exactly what he achieves at the conclusion of chapter 1 by asserting the image of God created in him, an act of faith seeking understanding, of believing in order to gain insight, regarding his own distended existence. Carrying out this act, though, demands the right sort of disposition, which Anselm acquires by means of a humble but spirited petitioning of God.

C. BELIEVING IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND

In the fifth paragraph of chapter 1's meditation, Anselm petitions God for help as follows:

Look back, Lord, hear, enlighten us, show yourself to us. Restore yourself to us, so that it may be well for us, you without whom it is just as ill for us. Pity the labors and endeavors toward you by us who avail nothing without you. You call upon us, 'help us'. I beseech you, Lord, may I not despair by sighing, but sigh forth by hoping. My heart is embittered by its desolation; I beseech you, Lord, ensweeten it by your consolation.⁵⁶

55. Cf. Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. C.-M. des Granges (Paris: Garnier, 1961), §233 (p. 136): "... il faut parler. Cela n'est pas volontaire: vous êtes embarqué."

56. *Respice, domine, exaudi, illumina nos, ostende nobis teipsum. Restitue te nobis, ut bene sit nobis, sine quo tam male est nobis. Miserare labores et conatus nostros ad te, qui nihil valemus sin te...* *Obsecro, domine, amaricatum est cor meum sua desolatione, indulca illud tua consolatione* (*Prosligion*, I [99:18–21,22–23]). Anselm alludes here to Psalm 78:9.

It is worth noting how Anselm expresses the being-and-well-being structure of his existence in this passage. As I said above, fallenness, which has the intelligible structure of being-and-ill-being, is a sort of "photographic negative" of being-and-well-being, a fact that Anselm subtly suggests in this passage with the word *tam*, "just as." Anselm wants God to bring him to a state of well-being to the same extent to which he is fallen or in a state of ill-being. Anselm also suggests being-and-ill-being as the "photographic negative" of being-and-well-being when he asks God to "ensweeten" (*indulca*) his "embittered" (*amaricatum*) heart. Consider also the relation between "desolation" and "consolation."

In desolation, Anselm expresses his neediness. From God above he desires a looking-back (*respectus*) and a being-with-him-in-his-aloneness (*consolatio*). Without God's help it will be ill for him; with God's help it will be well. Thus Anselm lays out the alternatives implicit in his self-reflective meditation thus far. If he is fallen and strives for a better future without God's aid, his existence is to be understood in terms of being-and-ill-being; for as fallen he has not the wherewithal to bring about a better future for himself. If, on the other hand, he is fallen and strives for a better future with God's aid, his existence is understandable in terms of being-and-well-being; for God's aid is able to compensate for Anselm's fallenness and bring him to an end that he cannot achieve on his own.

Later in this same paragraph, therefore, Anselm expresses a desire that his human striving to see God be met by God's merciful attention toward him:

Teach me to seek you and show yourself to the one seeking, because I can neither seek you unless you teach, nor can I come upon you unless you show yourself. May I seek you by desiring, may I desire you by seeking. May I come upon you by loving, may I love you by coming upon you.⁵⁷

The interplay for which Anselm petitions here involves, on the one hand, his own spirited drive to see God coupled with humble receptivity and, on the other, divine manifestation or instruction. In other words, on the one side is Anselm's seeking for the deeper truth concerning his distended existence in and through God, while on the other side is a divine condescension for which Anselm pleads. Anselm's petitioning, therefore, exhibits a confident and desire-driven striving for insight coupled with docility that stems from the recognition that whatever insight he gains comes from God. Hence

One might compare Anselm's thinking here with Hegel's understanding of "nothingness" or "determinate negation," as he articulates it in the *Introduction of Phenomenology of Spirit*. Addressing the "natural consciousness" of "sceptics" who see negation only as falsity, Hegel says: "This is just the scepticism which only ever sees pure nothingness in its result and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is specifically the nothingness of that from which it results. For it is only when it is taken as the result of that from which it emerges, that it is, in fact, the true result; in that case it is itself a determinate nothingness, one which has a content. When ... the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a determinate negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller [Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1977], *Introduction*, §79).

57. *Doce me quaerere te, et ostende te quaerenti; quia nec quaerere te possum nisi tu doceas, nec invenire nisi te ostendas. Quaeram te desiderando, desideram quaerendo. Inveniam amando, amem inveniando* (*Prosligion*, I [100:7–11]).

Anselm’s prayer in this fifth paragraph expresses the seemingly paradoxical combination of rational spiritedness and humble receptivity.⁵⁸

Thus complexly disposed, Anselm is poised for an act of faith seeking understanding, that is, a desire-driven striving for insight coupled with foregoing trust in God. Anselm expresses this act in an assertion that opens the sixth and final paragraph of chapter 1:

I confess, Lord, and I give thanks, because you have created in me this your image, that remembering you I may think you, may love you. But it is so effaced by the rubbing of vices, so darkened by the smoke of sins, that it cannot make that for which it was made unless you renew it and reform it.⁵⁹

The image of God created in him, yet sinfully effaced and darkened by him: this is the trustworthy insight whereby Anselm unifies and makes intelligible his distended self-reflecting existence. Indeed, having this image makes possible those rational activities of thinking, remembering, and loving that Anselm carries out in this meditation. In addition, self-reflection by means of these activities affords an oblique vision of God as the source and end, the Alpha and Omega, of his looking backward and forward—his remembering and loving—and as the exemplar of his inward thinking. Remembering his fallenness suggests a divine maker from whose intention he has defected, and loving a better future suggests a divine end in whom he can find fulfillment, while inward thinking suggests a nested structure in his own being, a self-surpassing by means of thought that imitates divine self-knowledge. Is it, then, that in his own existence as a thinking-remembering-loving being Anselm comes upon a sign of God for which he was seeking? Perhaps so;

58. This “mixed” disposition that Anselm forms in himself by means of his petitioning seems to parallel what Benedict asks of the monk in the opening lines of the *Regula*: *Obsculta, o fili, praecepta magistri, et inclina aurem cordis tui, et admonitionem pii patris libenter excipe et efficaciter comple, ut ad eum per oboedientiae laborem redeas, a quo per inoboedientiae desidiam recesseras. Ad te ergo nunc mihi sermo dirigitur, quisquis abrenuntians propriis voluntatibus, Domino Christo vero regi militaturus, oboedientiae fortissima atque praeclara arma sumis (Regula Benedicti, Prologus)*. Benedict encourages what could be called a “spirited obedience,” especially if one thinks of obedience as the attentive listening (*ob-audire*) to one who is superior. Perhaps the disposition that Anselm fosters in himself in the fifth paragraph, then, is rightly characterized as Benedictine.

In addition, this mixed disposition that Anselm fosters here may be helpfully compared with the “genome” of *Eros* laid out by Diotima in the *Symposium* (see 203b–e). According to Diotima, *Eros* is the offspring of his father *Poros*, “Wherewithal” (whose father is *Mêtis*, “Intelligence”), and his mother *Penia*, “Poverty.” In his genetic constitution, then, *Eros* combines poverty with a wherewithal rooted in intelligence. For more on this, see my “An Erotic Pattern of Thinking in Anselm’s *Proslogion*,” *Quaestiones Disputatae* 2 (2011): forthcoming.

59. *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 (Proslogion, I [100:12–15])*.

for by meditating on his own existence by means of these rational activities, Anselm glimpses God through the divine image created in him. He looks along the lines of his thinking, remembering, and loving, as it were, and at the ever-more-distant extremity of each line he glimpses God himself.

Anselm's assertion of the image of God created in him achieves for him a higher perspective on his distended existence that embraces its apparently contrary moments. It allows him to see that every moment of his story is in fact a sign of God, at least insofar as it can be taken up in a rational activity and thus be suffused by an intelligibility made possible because of his rational, God-imagining existence.⁶⁰ Undoubtedly Anselm is aware of other possible responses to the puzzle of his existence. With less spiritedness, less humility, and some insight, for example, he could surmise something vaguer, such as that his life has a "plan" or a "destiny." Or, with more spiritedness, no humility, and little insight, he could assert that he fully determines his course in life, thus locating in himself the source of the intelligibility of his existence. Or, succumbing to despair, he could abandon the search to make his existence intelligible, thus resigning himself to a meaningless existence that goes from bad to worse. Instead of any of these partial or flawed responses, Anselm confesses the image of God created in him, an assertion that both upholds his dignity as a rational seeker who thinks, remembers, and loves, and acknowledges his dependency as a creature with a task to fulfill.

In addition, Anselm's assertion of his imagehood turns his self-reflection "inside-out," inasmuch as confessing the image of God created in him locates the grounds of the intelligibility of his existence in a reality other and greater than himself. This act of faith seeking understanding thus breaks Anselm out of the dimensions of his own inward thinking and opens him up intellectually to the depths of the divine. By means of self-reflection, Anselm both contains and surpasses himself intellectually, and by striving to make sense of his distended existence in its moments of thinking, remembering, and loving, he escapes the circle of self-reflection and sees in himself a reflection of the divine. The image of God created in him thus resolves the dialectical tension of his meditation on his existence as both fallen from something better and inclined toward something better; for it is a principle of his existence that embraces and transcends the distended dimensions of those moments in way that does not deny their reality, but makes them meaningful in reference to this deeper and greater reality within him.

60. Here, then, one can see how chapter 1 does in a very concise way what Augustine does in the *Confessions*, namely, recapture the whole story of his human life in a way that grasps the fundamental goodness of each of its moments at least insofar as they are recaptured and seen from a higher perspective as the playing out of a divine intention.

Anselm’s assertion, furthermore, awakens him to a God whose intelligibility exceeds what Anselm’s mind is capable of understanding. For as the principle—as both the beginning and the end—of Anselm’s own thinking-remembering-loving existence, God stands beyond the limits of Anselm’s human distended existence. Fittingly, then, Anselm concludes chapter 1 by noting the gap of intelligibility—the *metaxu*, the *regio dissimilitudinis*⁶¹—between the reality of God and Anselm’s own limited understanding, a gap that brings to light faith seeking understanding as the appropriate bridge toward the truth about God. He writes:

I do not attempt, Lord, to enter into your depth, because in no way do I compare my understanding to it; but I desire to some extent to understand your truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also: that ‘unless I will have believed, I will not understand.’⁶²

Anselm’s intelligence is simply unequal to the intelligibility of the God whom he has glimpsed by means of his self-reflective meditation. God’s depth surpasses the depth perception of Anselm’s mind. Anselm cannot lay hold of God in the way he might understand some finite, created nature; rather, whatever level of understanding of God that Anselm reaches comes through faith, through a foregoing movement of trust or belief in God that by its assertiveness straightens up Anselm’s mind in relation to a reality that ever surpasses whatever insight he achieves—a divine reality, in other words, that is “something than which nothing greater can be thought.”⁶³

In addition, the final statement of chapter 1 indicates why for Anselm faith seeking understanding is the appropriate cognitive approach to God. “I believe so that I may understand,” he says. “For I believe this also: that ‘unless I will have believed, I will not understand’.” Believing, then, is the principle of understanding; believing stands at the beginning and end of human cognitive encounters with reality that result in insight. In this concluding passage, therefore, Anselm suggests that an act of believing underlies believing

61. As Hankey points out, Anselm returns to this “gap of intelligibility” later in the work: “The language in Chapter Fourteen, combining *infirmirate* and *reverberatur* is that of *Confessions* 7.10.16, where, after the vehement radiance of God flashed on his eyes, Augustine fell back into the region of dissimilarity” (“*Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm’s Proslogion*,” 151).

62. *Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia ‘nisi credidero, non intelligam’* (*Proslogion*, I [100:15–19]). Anselm alludes here to Isaiah 7:9.

63. ... *aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* (*Proslogion*, II [101:5]).

in order to understand. In other words, there is a more radical trustfulness that grounds the act of trust that can result in insight. If this is so, then certainly it would be difficult to speak determinately about this core or primal believing or trusting, because it is conceived of as the foundation for the very movement of believing toward understanding. Perhaps it can be best described as a fundamental orientation and acquiescence of the human heart with respect to reality, or the human heart's primordial freedom to encounter and follow the trajectory of being-and-well-being.⁶⁴ If this description fits, then Anselm would be suggesting that the heart's foundational trustfulness in relation to reality underlies all human insight. Such a claim might be supported, moreover, by considering the beginnings and the culmination of human cognitive life. In its beginnings, does not trustfulness underlie, for example, the perception of physical realities, the acquisition of language, the recognition of others as family and friends, and the like? At its culmination, does not such trustfulness underlie insight into God to the extent that this can be had *in via*?⁶⁵ This meditative self-reflection, therefore, allows Anselm not only to glimpse God, but also to understand how he cognitively bridges the gap between himself and the God whom he seeks to understand by means of believing or trusting. This trustfulness of heart, therefore, suggests that intellectual "hope" informs our cognitive encounters with reality and inclines us toward successful insights when we follow the impetus from God as creator at the beginnings of our cognitive life or accept a word from God as revealer at its culmination.

64. Such an interpretation suggests an affinity between Anselm and Pascal with regard to the human heart's trustfulness and its role in our cognitive life. Consider, e.g., Pascal's well-known thought: "Le coeur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point; on le sait en mille choses. Je dis que le coeur aime l'être universel naturellement, et soi-même naturellement selon qu'il s'y adonne; et il se durcit contre l'un ou l'autre: est-ce par raison que vous vous aimez" (*Pensées* [Paris: Garnier, 1961], §227 pp. 146–47).

Along these lines, it is worth contrasting Anselm and Pascal with Nietzsche, who appears to encourage precisely the opposite, namely, a suspicion of the heart's foundational trustfulness, its "will to truth," its "prejudice" that underneath the appearances lies the truth of things. On this, see especially *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. W. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), Preface, I.1–4, and II.34 (pp. 1–3, 9–12, 45–47).

65. At both the origins of rational inquiry and its culmination, then, there is interplay between the human and the divine, although in these two interplays the roles reverse. At the origins of rational inquiry, the Divine "strives" by creating reality and the human heart acquiesces to reality, both its own and that of others things; while at the culmination of rational inquiry, which is exemplified in a work like the *Proslogion* that attempts to understand God as much as possible, the human heart strives by ascending and the divine acquiesces by condescending.

II. MAGNIFYING THE "LOGIC" OF FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

As was noted above, chapter 2 begins with the word *ergo*, "therefore," which signals logical continuity with the preceding *excitatio* whereby Anselm awakened himself for contemplating God. There are at least three ways to articulate this continuity, each of which sheds light on the Argument and the rest of the *Proslogion*. The way with which I am chiefly concerned in this paper is the continuation of the pattern of thinking established in chapter 1's self-reflective meditation into the rest of the *Proslogion*. This continuation becomes evident after delineating this pattern, as I just did in the previous section, and showing that a similar pattern is operative in chapter 2 and beyond, as I intend to do in this section.

To do this involves two tasks: first, to make clear how, absent a seemingly mystical experience like Anselm's, we can arrive at the thought that underlies the Argument, namely, God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought"—an issue that Anselm helpfully addresses in his response to Gaunilo, the monk who wrote a multifaceted criticism of the Argument; and second, to depict in broad strokes how this pattern of thinking is present as Anselm unfolds this thought of God in the remainder of the *Proslogion*. Thereby I hope to show that the very thought of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought" introduced in chapter 2 both can result from a pattern of thinking similar to the one in chapter 1 and initiates an explication of the truth of God's existence that also follows that pattern. A major difference, of course, is that in chapter 1, by excluding himself from all other things, Anselm seeks to understand the deeper truth of his own thinkable existence; whereas in the Argument and subsequent chapters, by including all other things along with himself, Anselm seeks to understand a God who is the deeper truth of thinkable reality itself. Hence, one might say that, beginning in chapter 2, Anselm magnifies the "logic" of faith seeking understanding so as to align his mind with the truth of God as the principle of the intelligibility of reality as a whole in all its heights, breadths, and depths.

It is easier to show the continuity of this pattern of thinking after considering two other continuities to which the opening *ergo* of chapter 2 points more directly. These evidence themselves when we read the concluding lines of chapter 1 and the opening lines of chapter 2 continuously as follows (with "//" indicating the chapter break):

I do not attempt, Lord, to enter into your depth, because in no way do I compare my understanding to it; but I desire to some extent to understand your truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe, but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also: that 'unless I will have believed, I will not understand'. // Therefore [*Ergo*], Lord, you who give understanding to faith, give to me, as much as you know to be advantageous, so that I may understand that

you are, as we believe, and that you are that which we believe. And indeed we believe that you are something than which nothing greater can be thought.⁶⁶

The first and most explicit continuity indicated in this passage is faith seeking understanding as a guiding principle of inquiry. At the end of chapter 1, Anselm confesses the image of God created in him in order to understand the deeper truth about his distended human existence. At the beginning of chapter 2, Anselm seeks to understand the God whom he confesses to be “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” and in subsequent chapters Anselm unfolds methodically the intelligibility of this confessed “something” as much as he is able. This passage makes clear, then, Anselm’s intention to carry on his inquiry in accord with the principle of faith seeking understanding.

A second and less explicit continuity indicated by this passage is that between Anselm’s recognition of God’s incomparable intelligibility in relation to his own intelligence near the end of chapter 1 and his thought of God as “something than which nothing greater can be thought” near the beginning of chapter 2. Anselm does not set his intelligence as equal to God’s depth because God ever surpasses whatever the limited and distended Anselm can think about him—a fact evident also from the ebb and flow of his struggle to understand God that he relates in the Preface. In the closing lines of chapter 1, Anselm suggests that God exists at the furthest extremity, so to speak, of Anselm’s thinking, remembering, and loving as the principle imaged in these rational activities. Hence, as those activities extend further and further, God ever surpasses them, just out of reach, as if just on the other side of them. This is why Anselm asserts God’s incomparable depth near the end of chapter 1, and near the beginning of chapter 2, Anselm captures his awareness of the human inability to equal this divine depth in the assertion of God as “something than which nothing greater can be thought.” This thought of God extends Anselm’s insight into the ever-surpassing depth of divine existence into chapter 2 and subsequent chapters. For as this elusive phrase indicates, no matter how much he plumbs reality by means of his thinking, God stands always deeper.

66. *Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum. Neque enim quero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam. Nam et hoc credo: quia ‘nisi credidero, non intelligam’. // Ergo, domine, qui das fidei intellectum, da mihi, ut quantum scis expedire intelligam, quia es sicut credimus, et hoc es quod credimus. Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit* (*Proslogion*, I [100:15–19] and II [101:3–5]). Here is a case where one might see that the *Proslogion* may be better understood if it were presented now in the way it apparently was when first published, namely, as a continuous text with chapter divisions indicated only in the margins. (On this, see note 40 above.) Such a presentation would likely prevent interpreters from treating the Argument apart from the context and pattern of thinking that chapter 1 establishes.

Taken together, these two particular continuities between the closing of chapter 1 and the opening of chapter 2 bring to light a more general continuity between the pattern of thinking in chapter 1’s *excitatio* and the pattern of thinking in the rest of the *Proslogion*. This continuity becomes evident if we consider how we can arrive at the thought of God as “something than which nothing greater can be thought” in the first place. Anselm addresses this in his response to Gaunilo, because one of Gaunilo’s objections is that he simply cannot think of “something than which nothing greater can be thought”; for upon hearing it he neither knows it from a genus or a species nor is able to conjecture it from anything else.⁶⁷ Anselm’s answer to this indicates a pattern of thinking similar to the one he follows in chapter 1. He writes:

[Y]ou say that when “that than which a greater is unable to be thought” is heard by you, you cannot think it or hold it in understanding as something real that is known either from its genus or from its species, because you neither know the thing itself nor can you conjecture it from something similar to it. But clearly the thing stands otherwise. For since every lesser good is similar to a greater good insofar as it is good, then—since by a gathering ascent [*conscondendo*] from lesser goods to greater ones, something greater can be thought from these—much more can we conjecture [*conicere*] something than which nothing greater can be thought.⁶⁸

There are two key words in this passage: *conscondendo* and *conicere*. By using these particular “mental verbs,” Anselm suggests that thinking through the lower and higher degrees of goodness, according to which we experience

67. *Huc accedit illud, quod praetaxatum est superius, quia scilicet illud omnibus quae cogitari possint maius, quod nihil aliud posse esse dicitur quam ipse deus, tam ego secundum rem vel ex specie mihi vel ex genere notam, cogitare auditum vel in intellectu habere non possum, quam nec ipsum deum, quem utique ob hoc ipsum etiam non esse cogitare possum. Neque enim aut rem ipsam novi aut ex alia possum conicere simili, quandoquidem et tu talem asseris illam, ut esse non possit simile quicquam (Quid ad haec respondeat quidam pro insipiente, [4] [126:29–127:3]).*

68. ... *dicis ‘quo maius cogitari nequit’ secundum rem vel ex genere tibi vel ex specie notam te cogitare auditum vel in intellectu habere non posse, quoniam nec ipsam rem nosti, nec eam ex alia simili potes conicere: palam est rem aliter sese habere. Quoniam namque omne minus bonum in tantum est simile maiori bono in quantum est bonum: patet cuilibet rationabili menti, quia de bonis minoribus ad maiora conscondendo ex iis quibus aliquid maius cogitari potest, multum possumus conicere illud quo nihil potest maius cogitari (Quid ad haec respondeat editor ipsius libelli, [VIII] [137:11–18]).* Anselm goes on to offer an intriguing example to make his point clearer: *Quis enim verbi gratia vel hoc cogitare non potest, etiam si non credat in re esse quod cogitat, scilicet si bonum est aliquid quod initium et finem habet, multo melius esse bonum, quod licet incipiat non tamen desinit; et sicut istud illo melius est, ita isto esse melius illud quod nec finem habet nec initium, etiam si semper de praeterito per praesens transeat ad futurum (Quid ad haec respondeat editor ipsius libelli, [VIII] [137:18–23]).* Commenting on this would take me too far afield, but it is at least worth noting here that Anselm chooses an example that utilizes perspectives on or dimensions of temporality, namely, mortality, immortality, and sempiternality. It would be worth pondering in what ways immortality is “greater than” mortality and sempiternality is “greater than” immortality.

and articulate reality in a rational way, draws us to make a “gathering mental ascent” (*con-scendere*) or a “gathering mental casting-forth” (*con-iacere*) toward what is ever greater and greater and, ultimately, toward “something than which nothing greater can be thought.” It is to be hoped, no doubt, that this human *conscendere* or “gathering mental ascent” is met by a divine *con-descendere* or “condescension.” If so, then the human seeking for the grounds of reality articulated intelligibly in terms of lesser and greater goodness finds its fulfillment in an insight into God, at least to some extent, as “something than which nothing greater can be thought.”

It does not appear, however, that Anselm considers this intellectual move toward “something than which nothing greater can be thought” as necessary, at least not in the manner in which drawing a syllogistic conclusion is. Rather, the movement is more like that of a proposal or a projection. Making the move means thinking through and along the structure of reality as good and better and even better all the way to its furthest end. Or, to say it in a way that indicates its continuity with the pattern of thinking in chapter 1, making this move means asserting “something than which nothing greater can be thought” as a principle that embraces and makes intelligible the whole of reality as thinkable in terms of its nested structure of being-and-well-being. Indeed, for us to recognize it as so structured is, for Anselm, part and parcel of our being rational and its being intelligible. For, as he says in the *Monologion*, “to be rational for a rational nature is nothing other than to be able to discern what is just from what is not just, what is true from what is not true, what is good from what is not good, and what is more good from what is less good.”⁶⁹ Seen in this light, then, the intellectual movement toward “something than which nothing greater can be thought” follows the pattern of thinking delineated in chapter 1’s *excitatio*, except this time that which Anselm is trying to ground is expanded to include the whole of thinkable reality articulated according to “moments” of lesser and greater goodness. Hence to arrive at “something than which nothing greater can be thought” is to arrive at a reality that both contains and transcends the whole of thinkable reality, taken as an articulated range of goodness, as the ground of its intelligibility.

Anselm’s assertion of “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” moreover, commences a single line of thinking and reasoning—that is, *unum argumentum*—with regard to God according to that same pattern. In the rest of the *Proslogion*, this thought of God as ever-surpassing becomes a dynamo, as it were, for approaching ever closer to the truth about God as the intelligible ground of thinkable reality that transcendentally contains

69. ... *rationali naturae non est aliud esse rationalem, quam posse discernere iustum a non iusto, verum a non vero, bonum a non bono, magis bonum a minus bono* (*Monologion*, LXVIII [78:21–23]).

and imparts every lesser and greater good. Hence by looking both low and high, downward and upward, at reality, Anselm unfolds methodically how God is ever greater—not so much in that he is the apex of the hierarchy of reality as in that he embraces supereminently every way of being better and every way of being self-diffusive at every level of reality. Because of this, Anselm progressively aligns his thinking with the depth of divine existence in subsequent chapters by articulating God as able-to-sense, all-powerful, merciful and unable-to-suffer, just, good, simple, uncircumscribed, sensible, and eternal and omnipresent as containing every time and place.

This thought of God, as I said above, initiates that same pattern of thinking as Anselm articulates God’s existence more and more. In other words, his methodical unfolding of “something than which nothing greater can be thought” follows the sort of lower-higher-deeper thinking that is on display in chapter 1 when he articulates his own existence as a thinking-remembering-loving image of God. This pattern manifests itself in the rest of the *Proslogion* on both a large scale and a small scale. On a large scale, Anselm has three foundational thoughts of God over the course of the work: “something than which nothing greater can be thought,” “something greater than can be thought,”⁷⁰ and “that good that contains the pleasantness of all goods.”⁷¹ These three thoughts can be seen as lower, higher, and deeper thoughts, respectively. The first is lower inasmuch as it puts God into a comparative relationship with thinkable (and thus lesser) things, the second is higher inasmuch as it puts God out of reach of any human thinking, and the third is deeper inasmuch as God is conceived of as holding together in a transcendent way all the dimensions of any good that can be encountered or imagined.⁷²

On a small scale, this pattern is operative also in Anselm’s thinking through God’s existence when he unfolds each of these foundational thoughts of

70. *Ergo domine, non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit, sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit. Quoniam namque valet cogitari esse aliquid huiusmodi: si tu non es hoc ipsum, potest cogitari aliquid maius te; quod fieri nequit (Proslogion, XV [112:14–17]).*

71. *Excita nunc, anima mea, et erige totum intellectum tuum, et cogita quantum potes, quale et quantum sit illud bonum. Si enim singula bona delectabilia sunt, cogita intente quam delectabile sit illud bonum, quod continet iucunditatem omnium bonorum; et non qualem in rebus creatis sumus experti, sed tanto differentem quanto differt creator a creatura (Proslogion, XXIV [117:25–118:3]).*

72. I would also suggest other sets of three that correspond to these three foundational thoughts of God: the three tasks Anselm sets for himself in the Preface (*ad astruendum [1] quia deus vere est, et [2] quia est summum bonum nullo alio indigens, et [3] quo omnia indigent ut sint et ut bene sint [Proslogion, Prologus {93:7–9}]*); the three rational activities Anselm speaks of in chapter 1 (thinking, remembering, and loving); and the Trinity (Son, Father, and Spirit). Since commenting on these would take me too far afield here, spelling out these correspondences must be the task of a different paper. For more on this third step, seeing God as containing all things in himself, see Hankey, “*Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm’s Proslogion*,” 152–54.

God. In order to show this, it is helpful to recount Anselm's thinking about God in the chapters that follow on the heels of the Argument. In chapter 5, in light of the thought of God as "something than which nothing greater can be thought," Anselm asserts that God is "whatever it is better to be than not to be,"⁷³ a way of thinking about God that provides the impetus for the progress made in the subsequent chapters. But this progress is charted according to the lower-higher-deeper pattern introduced in chapter 1. And so, within a context of trying to make God more intelligible as the principle of the whole of thinkable reality according to its lesser and greater degrees of goodness, Anselm first looks "downward" and articulates God as *sensibilis*, "able-to-sense," in the highest way (chapter 6). Then, by looking "upward," Anselm articulates God as actively all-powerful (chapter 7). Next, by looking "inward" or more deeply, he resolves the tension to which God's ability-to-sense and all-powerfulness give rise by articulating God as both *misericors*, "pity-hearted" or "merciful," and yet *impassibilis*, "unable-to-suffer" (chapter 8). This articulation of God brings together God's intimacy and apparent receptivity as able-to-sense with his active all-powerfulness. To think of God as pity-hearted, however, is to think of him in "lower" terms, that is, in terms that seem to befit bodily beings. Hence, when coupled with the "higher" thinking of God as just, a tension arises that Anselm resolves by the "deeper" articulation of God as good and self-diffusive; for he traces both divine mercy and divine justice back to hidden springs of divine goodness (chapters 9–11). But to think of God as self-diffusively good is in a sense a "lower" way of thinking, at least insofar as it relates him to this world as its creator and its just and merciful provider. Hence this articulation of God is coupled with the "higher" articulation of God as simple, that is, as the very life by which he lives, the wisdom by which he is wise, and the like (chapter 12). This simplicity puts God out of reach as altogether apart from the complex and dependent character of the realities with which we are familiar. There is tension, though, between God as both related in some way to what he has created and yet altogether simple in himself, and this is resolved by the "deeper" conception of God as the altogether uncircumscribed and eternal spirit whose relation to this world of time and places is analogous to the soul's presence as a simple whole in each of the body's many members (chapter 13). At this point, however, Anselm begins to realize more fully that he is trying to think a divine reality that lacks thinkable boundaries. Hence God is not "something than which nothing greater can be thought"; he is, rather, "something greater than can be thought" (chapters 14–15), a

73. *Tu es itaque iustus, verax, beatus, et quidquid melius est esse quam non esse* (*Proslogion*, V [104:14–15]). Note also the title of this chapter: *Quod deus sit quidquid melius est esse quam non esse; et solus existens per se omnia alia faciat de nihilo* (*Proslogion, Capitula* [93:6–7]; V [104:9–10]).

move that marks a kind of rebeginning in Anselm's striving to unfold God's ever-surpassing existence.

To be sure, these reflections are primarily suggestive, not demonstrative, and certainly one could uncover other complexities and structures in chapters 6–13.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, as evidenced from this brief depiction, the pattern of thinking introduced in chapter 1—a pattern whereby Anselm articulates the dimensions of a reality and then transcends them in an attempt to align his mind with its deeper truth—is present in Anselm's unfolding of "something than which nothing greater can be thought" in this portion of the work. It appears, then, that beginning in chapter 2, on both a large scale and a small scale, Anselm magnifies the scope of the pattern of thinking introduced in his opening *excitatio* by striving to understand not only the intelligible ground of his own distended existence, but also the intelligible ground of thinkable reality as a whole.

IV. ENDEAVORING TO STRAIGHTEN UP OUR MINDS TOWARD CONTEMPLATING GOD

If the preceding interpretation of chapter 1 and the rest of the *Proslogion* is accurate, one might naturally wonder why, ultimately, Anselm thinks in accord with this pattern in the *Proslogion*? There are, I think, numerous reasons one could offer, but in the interest of not testing my reader's patience further, I will state just one here. It seems to me that by following this pattern of thinking, a pattern of moving lower, then higher, and then deeper, we limited and distended human thinkers imitate in our very contemplative thinking—in the fullness of our intentional existence—the ever-surpassing existence that God himself is. When we engage in such thinking with respect to God in particular, then, we images of God image God's surpassing existence in the very activities of thinking, remembering, and loving by which we image God. Perhaps this explains, at least in part, the enduring appeal of the *Proslogion* through the centuries. The work is, in the best sense of the word, seductive; for not only does it draw the reader into itself, but it also engages the reader in a spirited and erotic uncovering of a God who has freely clothed himself in creation in a way that in no way diminishes him, but only manifests his divine ever-greatness.⁷⁵ To put this in Anselm's words, we readers are enticed

74. For an insightful analysis of the "ring structure" also present in these chapters, which I think coheres with and sheds light on the structure I am articulating here, see M. Fournier, "Ring Structure in Chapters Six to Thirteen of Anselm's *Prologion*," *Dionysius* 27 (2010): 12–44. And for a look at the second half of the work, see Hankey, "Omnia sunt in te: A Note on Chapters Twelve to Twenty-six of Anselm's *Proslogion*," 145–54.

75. For more on this, see my "A Pattern of Erotic Thinking in Anselm's *Proslogion*," forthcoming.

to play the role that Anselm himself adopts in writing the *Proslogion*, namely, the role of “one endeavoring to straighten up his mind toward contemplating God.”⁷⁶ What Anselm is attempting in the *Proslogion*, then, is not merely an intellectual endeavor, but an endeavor of his entire being toward the loving beholding of God. And it is the struggle with the meaningfulness of our all-too-human existence, including and perhaps especially its fallenness, that by a beautiful divine condescension both disposes us and provides a map for our ascending journey of the mind toward God.

76. . . . *sub persona conantis erigere mentem suam ad contemplandum deum et quaerentis intelligere quod credit, subditum scripsi opusculum (Proslogion, Prooemium [93:21–94:2]).*