

A Personalist Aspect of Saint Anselm's Platonist Metaphysics¹

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In the fundamental lines that structure, and the basic desires that motivate his thought, Saint Anselm unmistakably belongs to the broad and variegated philosophical tradition we call Platonic.² He is also a *Christian* Platonist, and this qualification is very significant, situating Anselm squarely within a family of overlapping and intersecting historical currents beginning from the early Church Fathers, through Doctors such as Augustine, and leading later through a number of very fertile and lively tributaries of the last several centuries. Yet more interesting than noting that Anselm's philosophy fits somewhere within one classification of Platonic thought; i.e., Christian, is realizing that this adjective "Christian" does not merely classify or qualify, but reflects a radical, fundamental, pregnant transformation of Platonism. Since a vast literature produced by scholars much more deeply versed in it than myself more fully fleshes out this difference, I would like to stress only a few points here.

Platonism is not "adjective-neutral," one might say. As a fundamental orientation and tradition of philosophical thinking, it does not remain essentially the same thing, just directed to pagan, Jewish, Christian, or Islamic ends. It is not, and by its own self-understanding could not be, a philosophy already essentially and fully given and then simply filled out with pagan, Jewish, Christian, or Islamic contents. The broad themes constitutive of early Platonism ("early" being used here in relation to the history of Platonic thought extending into modernity) naturally lead on further than themselves,

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² Whether Anselm ought to be considered more specifically a Neoplatonist, and to what degree, is a question examined in detail and with acuity in K. Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997). Not being a specialist in Neoplatonism, I prefer to commit myself to the weaker and more generic vocabulary of "Platonism" in describing Anselm's thought, a tack Rogers herself adopts in, "Can Christianity Be Proven? St. Anselm on Faith and Reason," *Anselm Studies* 2 (1988): 459–479.

expressive of a restlessness for the Good beyond being. Complicating this is a self-revelation from God, provided and meditated upon in great detail and depth over time, as a provocation to dialogue, reflection, ascesis and contemplation, interaction with and participation in the Good. And, I think, Christian Platonism, if its Christianity is genuine, necessarily develops insights that from a later perspective we now recognize and label as “personalist.” That is the case with Anselm, as I hope to show in at least one way.

Features of Anselm’s Christian Platonism

A number of central themes of Anselm’s thought are clearly Platonic.³ Here, I will briefly touch on a few. His *Monologion* begins by invoking the hierarchy of being, articulated first in terms of degrees of goodness,⁴ then greatness,⁵

³On Anselm’s Neoplatonism in general, see F.-J. Thonnard, A.A., “Caractères augustinien de la méthode philosophique de saint Anselme,” *Spicilegium Beccense* 1 (1959): 171–183; A. Audet, “Une source augustinienne de l’argument de saint Anselme,” in *Etienne Gilson: Philosophe de la chrétienté* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1949), 105–142; V. J. Bourke, “A Millennium of Christian Platonism: Augustine, Anselm, and Ficino,” *Anselm Studies* 2 (1985): 1–22; F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B., “Anselm und der (Neu-)Platonismus,” *Analecta Anselmiana* 1 (1969): 39–71; K. Flasch, “Der philosophische Ansatz des Anselm von Canterbury im Monologion, und sein Verhältnis zum augustinischen Neuplatonismus,” *Analecta Anselmiana* 2 (1970), 1–43; cf. K. Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury*.

⁴Anselm, *Monologion* c. 1, p. 13–14. All translations from Anselm’s treatises are the author’s (consulting and greatly benefitting from translations by Hopkins and Richardson, Williams, Deane, and Charlesworth) and are from Anselm, *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi opera omnia*, ed. F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B., 5 vols. (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1940–1961); or from Anselm, *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. R. W. Southern and F. S. Schmitt, O.S.B. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). Citations of Anselm’s texts provide chapter number (prefaced where appropriate by book number), and the page number of the appropriate volume of *Opera Omnia* or *Memorials*. Each text will be cited with these abbreviations:

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|-----|------------------------|-----|--|
| M | <i>Monologion</i> | P | <i>Proslogion</i> |
| DV | <i>De Veritate</i> | DLA | <i>De Libertate Arbitrii</i> |
| DCD | <i>De Casu Diaboli</i> | DI | <i>De Incarnatione Verbi</i> |
| CDH | <i>Cur Deus Homo</i> | DC | <i>De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato</i> |

DC *De Concordia Praescientiae et Praedestionis et Gratiae Dei cum Libero Arbitrio*

DHM *Liber Anselmi Archiepiscopi de Humanis Moribus per Similitudines*

DA (*Alexandri Monachi Cantuariensis*) *Liber Ex Dictis Beati Anselmi*

References to letters are from Anselm, *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. and ed. W. Frölich, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990–1994), and are listed as Ep., followed by the page number of the appropriate volume. References

then having being through another or through itself.⁶ He lays out scales of ontological dignity for created being, writing: "One who doubts whether a horse is better in its nature than a block of wood, and a human being better than a horse, should hardly be called a human being."⁷ He later clarifies this:

Every intellect judges that natures in any way living excel [*prae-stare*] those not living, and sentient ones non-sentient ones, and rational ones non-rational ones. For since the supreme nature in his unique way not only is, but also lives, and is sentient, and is rational ... what in any way lives is more like to it than what does not in any way live, and what by bodily sense or by any way whatsoever knows something than what senses nothing at all. And, what is rational more than what is not capable of reason Just as what by nature excels more [*praestantius est*] by its natural essence is closer to the one which most greatly surpasses all others [*praestantissimo*], likewise that nature is greater, whose essence is more like that of the supreme essence.⁸

In the *Dicta Anselmi*, Anselm makes a similar set of distinctions: "the soul is vegetative, sentient, rational."⁹ Later in *Monologion*, he generalizes the principle differentiating degrees of being: "the more that things are similar to [the divine Word], the more truly and the more excellently they exist [*existunt*]."¹⁰

Anselm also distinguishes gradations of value, truth, and being in different sorts of expressions, images, and knowledge.¹¹ At one extreme are mere outward signs, of perhaps very little connection to signified object(s), or such signs existing in our minds.¹² Anselm raises a number of cases where people are misled by uncritical reliance upon verbal expressions or analogous

to prayers are from Anselm, *The Prayers and Meditations of St. Anselm*, trans. B. Ward, S.L.G. (New York: Penguin, 1973). References to the *Vita Anselmi* are from Eadmer of Canterbury, *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. and trans. R. W. Southern (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1962).

⁵ M 2, 15. He clarifies: "But I do not mean greatness spatially ... but rather that with which the greater a thing is, the better, or of higher dignity, it is, e.g. wisdom." 15.

⁶ M 3, 16.

⁷ M 4, 17.

⁸ M 31, 49.

⁹ DA 17, 175.

¹⁰ M 34, 54.

¹¹ Cf. M 10 and 33, DV 2–9. Another line of this is suggested by Anselm's distinctions throughout his works (particularly in relation to understanding of Scripture) between what is properly said and what is improperly said (though often according to common usage).

¹² M 10, 24–25.

mental conceptions, which can be formed, but which cannot be understood, because they do not actually correspond to anything, one example of this occurring in *Proslogion* where the Fool can say, but not entirely coherently understand “God does not exist.”¹³ His disciple Boso provides another example in saying: “I can think and speak those very words, but I cannot think of their meaning, just as I cannot understand falsity to be truth.”¹⁴ A related example would be the Devil (though this would apply to all evil angels and humans), who cannot be happy when unrealistically willing what neither can nor should be.¹⁵ In *De Incarnatione*, it is precisely their reliance on a nominalist understanding of language, concepts, and realities which renders the dialecticians incapable of approaching theological and philosophical questions aright.¹⁶ In such cases, as well as in his investigations of the genuine meanings of “foreknowledge,” of the will being mastered, or of “nothing,” Anselm strives to penetrate through reflection and dialectic beyond misleading and inadequate structures of verbal and mental expressions to the more and more richly intelligible realities.

Fortunately, likeness to the reality of which an expression, image, or knowledge is, provides its own criteria of reality, goodness, and truth. Anselm accordingly writes of a more adequate way of expression of a reality in the mind: “inwardly speaking the things themselves [*res ipsas*] in our mind, either by imagination of bodies or reason’s understanding in place of the diversity of the things themselves.”¹⁷ He uses “human being” as an example:

We express “human being” in one way, when we signify it with that name, i.e. “human being”; another way when we silently think that same name; another, when we perceive [*intuetur*] that very human being either through the image of the body or through reason. We perceive though the body’s image when we imagine it with its sensible figure, but through reason when we think its universal essence, which is “mortal rational animal.”¹⁸

Precisely through these more adequate, more true expressions a human mind

¹³ P 4, 103–104.

¹⁴ CDH 1.19, 84.

¹⁵ DCD 13, 258.

¹⁶ DI 1.

¹⁷ M 10, 25.

¹⁸ M 10, 25. Two remarks need be made. First, Anselm is simply providing an example here, not systematically delimiting reason’s capacities against those of imagination, and we cannot legitimately conclude that he would restrict reason to grasping universal essences. Second, he later qualifies this definition in CDH 2.11: “I do not think that mortality belongs to pure, but rather to corrupt human nature,” 109. Notice that in this, as so often in his work, Anselm discursively reasons towards a more adequate understanding of what reason first grasped but less perfectly.

“attempts to express [something’s] likeness as best it can in its thought,” for instance an image of an absent person: “my power of thought forms an image of him like that one that is brought into my memory through vision.”¹⁹ In a reflexive way, through reason, “when it understands itself by thinking” the rational mind also forms an image of itself,²⁰ permitting it both to grasp itself and also to rise above itself to the Triune God. Still, the images generated and relied upon by the rational human mind remain ever deficient in comparison to those of the divine mind. The divine substance’s expression, the Son, is in fact the fullness of the divine substance, as likewise is the Holy Spirit proceeding from both. While ultimately, Anselm tells us, God’s knowledge, both of self and of created being, remains for us incomprehensible,²¹ he nevertheless determines that at the apex of the hierarchy of being lies being as it is in God’s knowledge, higher even than created things as they are in themselves, in their own substance or being. Things are most true, and possess the greatest being, as they are in God, in the divine mind. “[I]n the Word ... there is not a likeness of those things [which were created], but rather their true and simple essence. In created things, however, there is no simple and absolute essence, but barely some imitation of that true essence.”²² He reasons that the supreme spirit,

is the supreme wisdom and supreme reason, in which are all things that were made For before they were made, and once they are made, and when they are corrupted or in some other way are changed, they are always in Him, not what they are in themselves [*quod sunt in seipsis*], but what He Himself is. For in themselves, they are mutable essences created according to immutable reason. In Him, however, they are that first essence and the first truth of existence.²³

Created beings even may possess qualities in their most true and real being in the divine mind which they do not possess in themselves or in our representations of them.²⁴ *De Veritate* contains an interesting exchange along these

¹⁹ M 33, 52.

²⁰ M 33, 52.

²¹ M 64, 75, also M 36, 54–55. We run squarely into the limits of our comprehension of the divine wisdom and reason in M 34, P 11, CDH 2.16, God’s wisdom by which he providentially “orders even evils well,” is also incomprehensible, CDH 1.7, 56.

²² M 31, 50. In DC 1.3, Anselm writes that “God, who knows all truth and nothing but truth” sees things precisely as they are: “just as He sees them, so they are,” 252–253.

²³ M 34, 53.

²⁴ For instance, “whatever has been made, whether it lives or does not live, or whatever way it is in itself, in Him, it is that very life and truth,” M 35, 54.

lines: “Teacher: So, there is truth in the being of all things that are [*omnium quae sunt essentia*], because they are what they are in the supreme truth. Student: I see then that truth is there [in the being of all things], in such a way that there cannot be falsehood there, since what is falsely, is not.”²⁵ This truth “in the existence of things [*rerum existentia*], is an effect of the supreme truth,” and it is then in its turn the cause of other truths.²⁶ Anselm also specifies that ultimately:

Truth is improperly said to be “of this or that thing,” since it is not in these things themselves or through the things in which it is said to have its being. But since these things themselves are according to it [i.e. truth], which is always present to those things that are as they ought to be, then ‘the truth of this or that thing’ is spoken of Supreme truth which subsists through itself is not of any thing, but when something in is accordance with [supreme truth], then [that thing’s] truth or rectitude is spoken of.²⁷

This leads naturally to another key Platonist doctrine, that of participation, to which Anselm is clearly and entirely committed.²⁸ All beings participate in being, all good things and goodnesses ultimately participate in goodness, all just things and forms or instances of justice participate in justice, all truths participate in truth,²⁹ all living things in life, and so forth. And, for every such quality that can be attributed to God substantially, i.e. “whatever it is absolutely [*omnino*] better to be than not to be,”³⁰ God does not have or participate in that quality, since this would elevate something above God, subjecting God to something yet greater than him,³¹ and the supreme being would not be through itself but through another.³² Rather, God is each of those qualities. Using the example of justice, God *is* justice, justice itself (*ipsa justitia*); his very being is justice (*existit justitia, existens justitia*). God is the very

²⁵ DV 7, 185.

²⁶ DV 10, 190.

²⁷ DV 13, 199.

²⁸ For review of positions holding Anselm is not committed to a Neoplatonic doctrine of participation (e.g. Schmitt, Hopkins), and exegetical argument maintaining that Anselm is so committed, cf. K. Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 91–112.

²⁹ DV 2, “Nothing is true except by participating in truth,” 177.

³⁰ M 15, 29.

³¹ M 16, 30. DI 4, 17. Asserting this amounts to claiming to elevate the human intellect above God himself, DI 4, 18, P 3, 103. And this in reality expresses a form of “self will” (*propria voluntas*) opposed to God’s will, about which; cf. DI 10, DCD 4, CDH 2.9, DHM 6–10, 37–39.

³² M 16, 30.

justice by which He is just,³³ and through which all other things are just by participation. This holds similarly for all the other divine attributes.³⁴

Lacking space here to elaborate these, I make just a few further points about participation and divine attributes. First, we must not imagine that we grasp any of these attributes in their fullness, as they are in themselves, in God. Often, we do not even grasp them with the adequacy we ought. Second, while the attributes are simple, indeed so simple as to be in some ineffable way identical,³⁵ participation in them is not simple, and involves differing, often quite complex modes on the parts of creatures. The specific contours of participation in different divine attributes is something Anselm rarely addresses systematically, leading some scholars to dismiss it as simply uncritical and generic appropriation of that Platonic notion. Jonathan J. Sanford, for example, writes wryly of “the strangeness of Anselm’s rather vague theory of participation,”³⁶ indicating the need for further exegetical and interpretative work on this topic.³⁷ Third, Anselm stresses not only the

³³ P 12, 110.

³⁴ Anselm nowhere provides a comprehensive list of the divine attributes, but his several listings can be compiled. From M 16: being or essence (*essentia*), life, reason, salvation, justice, wisdom, truth, goodness, greatness, beauty, immortality, incorruptibility, immutability, happiness (*beatitudo*), eternity, power, unity; M 60: memory, understanding, love; P 11: sentient; P 14: light, simplicity, and perhaps arguably purity, certainty, and splendor; P 17 goes so far as to speak of beauty, harmony, [good] odor, [good] taste, and softness [to touch] as “things [God] has, in You by your ineffable manner, You who have given then to created things in their sensible manner,” 113.

³⁵ Cf. M 17 and 59, P 18, DI 4. P 9 also maintains: God’s “goodness is nothing without justice, and indeed harmonizes [*concordat*] with justice. DV 12 maintains the identity between the divine will and divine rectitude, and hence divine justice. DCD 1 identifies the supreme good and the supreme being, 235. In DCD 12, God is “so powerful in happiness and justice, indeed since in Him happiness and justice are not different but rather one good, He is so omnipotent in simple good,” 253. In DI 7, “God cannot be understood apart from His power. If power is substantial to God, either it is a part of His essence, or it is that very thing itself which his whole essence is,” 22. CDH 1.13 asserts the identity between God and the supreme justice which “keeps God’s honor in the ordering of things,” 71.

³⁶ J. J. Sanford, “Restoration and Rationality: St. Anselm on the Pursuit of Happiness,” *Fides Quaerens Intellectum* 2 (2003): 346–347n57.

³⁷ For literature engaging Anselm’s moral theory framing matters in terms of participation, see R. Pouchet, O.S.B., *La Rectitudo chez saint Anselme: Un itinéraire augustinien de l’âme à Dieu* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1964); P. Baumstein, O.S.B., “Anselm’s Intellect and the Embrace of Bec,” *Faith and Reason* 14 (1988): 219–242; P. Baumstein, O.S.B., “Thought as a Fulcrum for Benedict’s Rule,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 3 (1991): 194–203; P. Baumstein, O.S.B., “Anselm on the Dark Night and Truth,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 35 (2000): 239–249; P. Baumstein, O.S.B., “Saint

transcendence but also the immanence of God. Rational investigation of the divine attributes in which we participate leads to the more adequate understanding that created beings participate not only by having or enacting the attribute, but by being *in* it, as Anselm explicitly teaches of truth.³⁸

A fourth and perhaps most significant point leads us into another Platonist feature of Anselm's thought: rational beings possess unique value and dignity,³⁹ residing in their capacity and call to greater, fuller, deeper, more pure, and more reflectively intensive participation in the divine attributes,⁴⁰ in God, or put another way in the economy of the Trinity and created being. Although in comparison to God, created beings "almost do not exist and barely exist [*ferè non esse et vix esse*],"⁴¹ with the endowment of rationality, itself

Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection," *Faith and Reason* 29 (2004): 165–181; and, D. Duclow, "Structure and Meaning in Anselm's *De Veritate*," *American Benedictine Review* 26 (1975): 406–417. The specific structures of human participation in the divine attributes of rectitude and justice has been a preoccupation of my work on Anselm's thought of late, and I am currently at work on a monograph on Anselm's moral theory. For partial developments of this, see G. Sadler, "Freedom, Inclinations of the Will, and Virtue in Anselm's Moral Theory," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 81 (2008): 91–108; G. Sadler, "A Perfectly Simple God and Our Complicated Lives: The 2008 Saint Anselm Lecture," *The Saint Anselm Journal* 6 (2009): 1–23; G. Sadler, "*Non Modo Verbis Sed Et Verberibus*: St. Anselm on Punishment, Coercion, and Violence," *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 45 (2010): 35–61.

³⁸ DV 7, 185 and 13, 199. On all created things being in God's being, cf. M 14.

³⁹ CDH 1.15 indicates that like all other created beings, rational beings have their allotted places and roles in the universe, Anselm goes on to argue that human nature "was made [by God] for its own sake, not solely for replacement of individuals of some other nature [i.e. the fallen angels]," 1.18, 78. Later he calls rational nature "sublime," and suggests that "it is recognized that God created nothing more precious than rational nature," CDH 2.4, 99. God did not even create Adam's (and our own) reproductive nature in vain, to correct some error on his part, CDH 2.16, 119.

⁴⁰ Cf. G. Sadler, "A Perfectly Simple God and Our Complicated Lives," 8–9.

⁴¹ In M 28, he says all things other than God "almost do not exist and barely exist [*ferè non esse et vix esse*]"; they exist "mutably in some respect [*secundum aliquid*] [and] at some time will be or were what they are not, or they are what at some time they will not be or were not ... what they will be is not now ... what they were no longer is ... what they are in the wavering and so short and barely existing present hardly is. They thus so mutably exist, that not inappropriately they are denied to exist simply and perfectly, and absolutely, and they are asserted to almost not exist and to barely exist," 46. P 22 clarifies this well: "Therefore you alone, Lord, are what you are, and you are He who is. For what is one thing in its whole, and another in its part, and in which there is something changeable, is not entirely what it is. And what begins from non-being and can be thought not to be, and returns to non-being unless it subsists through another, and what has a past that now it is not and a future which it

a greater degree of being than all grades of non-rational being, come other connected capacities, a fuller openness by the rational being to the entire range of created and creative being. Katherin Rogers touches on this in noting a “basic insight of the Neoplatonic world view . . . that the entire universe is the unfolding of mind through levels of reality, where the ontological levels are at once distinct and interpenetrating.”⁴²

One aspect of this higher degree of ontological dignity is the image of God set within the fabric of our mind, upon which we can progressively draw both for, and through, right use of will and reason. Another aspect is the very freedom of choice possible only at our level of being, by our endowment with reason and the correspondingly more complex type of will, a genuinely and radically free will, capable of self-determination and of freely producing things through its volition.⁴³ A third aspect, upon which Anselm places great stress, is the obligation to possess justice not only externally incumbent upon but woven into and discoverable within the very nature of rational beings.⁴⁴ The rational creature has the capacities to recognize, desire, love, receive, govern itself by, and keep justice. Even when lacking that justice, the rational creature is under an obligation to have it, so that the will remains “a debtor” and within it “there remain something like beautiful vestiges” of justice.⁴⁵ “For a creature to owe (*debere*) justice shows its natural dignity.”⁴⁶ Proper use of these means and dignities leads into closer approximation to ourselves as we are in the divine mind, selves yet more real than those we presently know and experience. This also contributes to seeing other things and persons as they truly are, and draws us into closer communication with the fount of reality itself, the Trinity.

The Anselmian Itinerary towards God

It would not be exaggeration to claim that all of Anselm's writings in one manner or another plot steps along a path leading to God. Here, I will not

is not yet, that thing does not exist of itself and absolutely [*non est proprie et absolute*],” 116.

⁴² K. Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury*, 242.

⁴³ In DC 1.3, Anselm explicitly recognizes this endowment residing in the manner by which God has arranged things.

⁴⁴ CDH 1.9. On the teleology inherent to our rational and volitional capacities; cf. M 68, DV 4, 9, and 12, DLA 4, CDH 2.1, DC 1.6 and 3.2, DHM 3 and 36, DA 17.

⁴⁵ DCD 16, 259–260.

⁴⁶ DCD 16, 260

systematically chart out this itinerary, but only treat a few features relevant here. First, it is important to stress several personalist aspects of his conception of the human being's approach to God. God is, of course, supereminently personal, a Trinity of persons in eternal relationship and communication, equal and same in substance, and also uniquely revealed in His truth in Jesus Christ.⁴⁷ Return to God is thus not absorption in some abstract principle or even reality beyond personhood, but relationship to a person and concomitantly with persons. On the side of the creature, Anselm does not envision, advocate, or seek fusion of the self with God or loss of one's own self in God, as have some mystics. The Anselmian path of the rational creature's return to God leads through fuller development of the creature's personhood.⁴⁸ The fundamental creaturely goal is beatitude with God⁴⁹ in what he terms concord.⁵⁰ In a number of ways and passages, Anselm actually depicts both heavenly and earthly union with God as integrally involving relationships with other persons.

The human person progresses towards God through his or her fuller and fuller participatory engagement of the divine attributes. This occurs in a number of interlocking, mutually reinforcing, and distinguishably determinate manners. One set of these consist in applying the human mind to better understand these attributes, these realities in the very heart of God, but participated in by created being. This is precisely what Anselm's works provide his readers a framework for themselves doing, leading them dialogically into thinking through both the intricacies and the essential nature of be-

⁴⁷ On this, cf. in particular CDH 1.11, 2.4, and 2.18, the *Meditation on Human Redemption*, and the *Prayer for Friends*.

⁴⁸ Anselm first begins to invoke a distinction between a human person and human nature in DI 1, developing it in DI 11, then further in DCV.

⁴⁹ M 68–70, P 24–26, CDH 1.9. Anselm in several places distinguishes fourteen constituent parts of happiness, counterposed against fourteen parts of misery. “[T]he parts of happiness are beauty, nimbleness [*agilitas*], fortitude, freedom, wholeness [*samitas*], enjoyment of pleasures [*voluptas*], longevity, wisdom, friendship, concord, honor, power, [feeling of] security [*securitas*], and joy . . . Now then, the first seven parts of that happiness pertain to the happiness of the body, the seven other parts to that of the soul,” DHM 48, 57. For descriptions of each of these cf. DHM 50–71, and DA 5. Cf. also his discussion of heavenly beatitude in P 25.

⁵⁰ Concord, which is a quality of one's will in relationship with other wills, is central to Anselm's conception of heavenly beatitude, as P 25 and Ep. 112. It must also be a motivating goal of earthly life, both as a prefiguration and as preparation for the kingdom of heaven. Cf. Ep. 286, 302, 345, 450, and DA 14. Numerous other letters indicate Anselm's conviction that relationships with those one loves form an integral part of the state of the blessed in heaven. Cf. Ep. 37, 38, 211. For particularly useful discussion of this issue, see P. Baumstein, O.S.B., “Anselm on the Dark Night and Truth.”

ing, truth, goodness, justice, eternity, happiness, reason, and wisdom, just to name a few of the attributes. However, Anselmian augmentation of human personal participation in the divine attributes is not solely or even primarily intellectual. More adequate understanding of the attributes comes not only through rational dialectic, or even meditation and contemplation, but just as much through progressive and often painful rectification of the will, through the affective dimension of the heart involving one's desires, loves, and emotions, through discipline, action, and the experiences providing new concrete intelligibility arising out of them,⁵¹ and through prayer. It also occurs through one's relationships with other persons, in community, and via the duties of one's roles or offices.⁵²

As the late Dom Paschal Baumstein observes, intellectual, volitional, affective, practical, and relational aspects of the human person become integrated in the Anselmian itinerary towards God. Participation is, he says, an "unending effort" of *conversatio*, "a matter of continually turning to the Lord," attended by "similitude, rectitude, truth and concordia."⁵³ Each of the virtues, determinate dispositional participations in divine rectitude, justice, and goodness, "reflects some quality that exists supremely in God It is possible to manifest that virtue—a virtue that in God is absolute—because human being is created in God's image. Virtue articulates that image by effecting similitude."⁵⁴ In noting the equal importance and involvement of other dimensions of the human person, we should not, of course, downplay the role and capacities of the rational mind. The ideas with which we conceptualize and engage with God, ourselves, others and the things of the world are of vital importance. In *De humanibus moribus*, for example, Anselm likens the human heart to an ever-grinding mill, continually turning over thoughts. He

⁵¹ Anselm does speak of a superiority to experience over merely knowing about a thing by report in DI 1, and asks to "experience what I believe" in the *Prayer to John the Baptist*, 133. In that prayer, he also writes of bitter experiences teaching human beings about evil, also in Ep. 84. In Ep. 232, Anselm tells counseling Hugh, who is considering the monastic vocation, "you will not be able to understand what I say unless you are willing to try it out by doing it," Ep. 232, p. 205. In CDH 2.13, he opines: "No one knows good perfectly unless he knows how to discern it from evil. But no one knows how to make this distinction who does not know evil," 112–113. Anselm even conjectures about Christ learning "by experience that of which He was not ignorant by knowledge," CDH 1.9, 62. There are, it should be pointed out, some experiences we would not want to, and should not have, for instance, the knowledge by experience of the fallen angel's misery in DCD 25.

⁵² For a few examples, see DHM 94, 127–129. Anselm's advice is recounted in the *Vita Anselmi* 1.31, 2.11, and Ep. 189.

⁵³ P. Baumstein, O.S.B., "Saint Anselm and the Prospect of Perfection," 169–171.

⁵⁴ P. Baumstein, O.S.B., "Anselm on the Dark Night and Truth," 248.

singles out three good types of thoughts there. The best are “pure thoughts, which the soul turns over when it thinks purely about God in settled contemplation;” second best, and less perfect, “those, by which one by meditating prepares oneself to ascend from one virtue to another; and third, “those by which a person intends to put aside their vices.”⁵⁵

Anselm himself provided countless more specific examples, some preserved in his texts, of such thoughts or ideas for himself and to the monks, clergy, and laypeople with whom he interacted. We will turn to a few of these ideas shortly, but first, we must reemphasize and further develop a point made earlier. In at least some of our ideas, we penetrate beyond the superficiality of mere arbitrary signs or mental concepts understood on similar lines. Through employment of imagination or reason, we actually do, according to Anselm, express the things themselves in our minds. Through some ideas, we relate and extend our minds outside of themselves (or in some cases deeper into themselves) to the core of realities. We enter into communication with their being. Granted, for the human mind, even this way of knowing and thinking remains mediated by images, but these images more directly participate in, indeed lead into, the realities in which they participate.

Images of Persons and Anselm’s Personalism

For Anselm, persons, whether divine or human, are clearly realities. On a trivial level, even every sign, expression, image, even a nonsense sound, has some being. But, in a more momentous way certain expressions or images possess or participate in greater reality. Those of created things in the divine mind are, as mentioned earlier, more real than are the very things themselves. Even those in human minds admit of greater or lesser adequacy. “All expressions [*verba*] by which we speak in the mind, i.e. think, whatsoever things are likenesses and images of the things of which they are expressions; and every likeness or image is more or less true depending on whether it more or less imitates that things of which it is a likeness.”⁵⁶ Expressions or images are “more true, to the degree that they are more like the things of which they are expressions, and which they signify with richer articulation [*expressius*],” and for us that will be “that likeness that is expressed in the concentration [*avie*] of the mind thinking on the thing itself.”⁵⁷

Now, an interesting and momentous question can be asked: ideas or images of persons are certainly signs of that person, which we can imagine, think of, remember, even reason about, but can they be more? Could they

⁵⁵ DHM 41, 54.

⁵⁶ M 31, 48.

⁵⁷ M 10, 25.

provide us a sort of access to the person of whom they are ideas or images, an access to the reality of the other person? Can such an idea or image not only provide us an object substituting for the person, upon which we can bring to bear our intellectual powers unfolding further what lies latent in it, or towards which we can direct our desires, emotions, love, and will? Can the image itself be something through which we can enter into or maintain a genuinely subjective, responsive relation with the person? Can such an image by its likeness to that of which it is the image, manifest genuine and productive activity in our mind, activity irreducible to that lent it by our mind, but rather in some way originated by the other person?

Clearly for Anselm there are some cases in which this takes place. In the divine and eternal generation and procession in the Trinity, the Son is the perfect expression of the Father, not only endowed with every attribute of the Father, but also for each such attribute, he is the very attribute of that attribute,⁵⁸ what I have termed elsewhere its “reflexive intensity.”⁵⁹ The Spirit, the love between Father and Son is also whatever they are, and is also the “reflexive intensity” of their shared attributes.⁶⁰ The triune economy, though, doubtless constitutes a special case, does it not? What of images in our minds, where there is no perfect identity between image and reality, but rather a gulf of deficiency. Are images in our mind not merely of persons, but personal, active, engaging us, or are they instead just stand-ins, props allowing us to project ourselves in interior dialogue, or rather monologue, or speaking most properly soliloquy?

In the case of ideas or images of God, Anselm does not appear to think so. In fact, he concludes in *Monologion*: “Whatever among created things is seen to be more alike to Him ... both by its greater likeness more greatly assists the mind seeking the supreme truth to approach it, and through its more excellent created essence teaches more what one ought to think [*aestimare*] about the creative mind.”⁶¹ The human mind itself provides the “mirror ... in which His image, so to speak, is reflected. It does this in part through resemblance to “that essence that by memory and understanding and love of itself constitutes an ineffable Trinity,” because the human mind carries out these acts with respect to itself. But “it proves itself an even truer image of it because it can remember, understand, and love the divine substance.”⁶² Through these relations with the triune God, always mediated through the human person's image(s) of God, which “do not so much display [God] through his essential being [*per proprietatem*] as gesture at him through some

⁵⁸ M 47, 63.

⁵⁹ Cf. G. Sadler, “A Perfectly Simple God and Our Complicated Lives,” 8–9.

⁶⁰ M 58, 69.

⁶¹ M 66, 77.

⁶² M 67, 78.

likeness,⁶³ the image of God the person possesses is gradually perfected, and in the process the person itself is perfected as an image of God. Yet, this is not simply the action of the creature ascending towards God, for He aids the process of inquiry and meditation, through the progressive unfolding of His own image and through collaborating in the human's intellectual and practical activity properly oriented towards fuller relation with God.⁶⁴

At one point in *Monologion*, Anselm explicitly acknowledges activity in God's very idea. While "I was asking myself about the Word ... the Word, by which the Creator who made all expresses himself, offered himself."⁶⁵ This collaboration and self-offering is more evident in *Proslogion*, in which Anselm asks God "by what signs, by what aspect will I seek you?"⁶⁶ He prays: "Teach me to seek you, and show yourself to me while I am seeking, for I cannot seek you unless you teach, nor can I find you unless you show yourself."⁶⁷ This prayer is answered in the dialectical unfolding of the idea "that than which nothing greater can be thought,"⁶⁸ which, as the creature step by step interrogates that idea, turns out to contain latent within itself so much and such profound rational understanding of God. Though Anselm does not do so, one could in fact speculate about Anselmian reasons why God's image or idea should itself be active, living, rationally communicative. I will mention only one: the more truthful an image it is—i.e., not only the more closely it resembles its object but also the more it is *as it should be* and the more it *does what it was made to do*—the more that image will be like that infinite, ineffable, being that gives all things their being and well being. Thus at a certain degree of adequacy, the image itself should come to possess (or rather, more properly speaking, to reveal) agency and genuine personality which entice the rational creature further into itself, and into more intimate transformative participation in the divine reality.

What of images of human persons in one's mind or as Anselm prefers to write, one's heart? Anselm writes to many of his correspondents about

⁶³ M 65, 76.

⁶⁴ Anselm speaks explicitly of God aiding the process of thinking about God in: P 1–4, 14, and 18; DLA 14; CDH com, 1.1, 1.2, and 1.25; DC 1.7, 2.1, 3.1, and 3.14; and Ep. 51. Human collaboration also function as channels of grace, implanting and cultivating the seeds of good thoughts and volitions discussed in DC 3.6.

⁶⁵ M 33, 51. A similar passage occurs in M 55: "As soon as the Word is considered, He most evidently proves Himself to be the offspring of Him from Whom He is," 67.

⁶⁶ P 1, 98.

⁶⁷ P 1, 100.

⁶⁸ It is worthy of note that capping the argumentation about God's existence, P 4 ends in thanks to God: "what previously I believed, You giving that, now I understand, You illuminating," 104.

possessing such images of them in his own heart. And he writes at times in terms which indicate these images are more than simple mental representations. Through them, one sustains the relationship with that person, or even deepens it. By means of the image preserved by and kept accessible to the act of memory, one may continually reach out to the other person through one's imagination and reason, in acts of understanding what is remembered, and extend oneself to them also through one's will, principally in acts of love or charity. By such an image, one has the person him- or herself in his heart, not merely a passive mind-produced representation, but something to some extent (granted not that of the actual person, let alone that person as he or she is in God's mind) active, loving, deepening in relationship. Such images possess varying degrees of adequacy. Interestingly, in the case of one former student Anselm ardently loved, Gilbert Crispin, Anselm acknowledges the insufficiency of the image he possesses to bear the weight of the relationship.⁶⁹ Anselm begs several of his other correspondents to set a more realistic image of himself, marked by his faults, in place of the inadequate one they possess and rely upon.⁷⁰ Still, Anselm describes a useful purpose for even such inadequate images. To William, he writes: "Frequently it happens that a friend does not perceive the faults of the one who is dear to him, or judges them lightly, whereas he gives him qualities he does not possess or exaggerates those he does." In such cases, "the love should be nourished that the error may be corrected, and the error should be so expelled that the love may be retained."⁷¹ Anselm thanks William "since you love me for being the way you proclaim me to be," even though he is not in reality like that. Though he continues, "I exhort you not to think that I am like that," wanting William to have a truer, though less inherently lovable image of Anselm, the old less true image is still to be retained: "pray that God will make me like the person you love and esteem." In effect, the old, less faithful image in some distant way reflects what Anselm ought to be, and what he is most truly in the mind of God.

Anselm writes to a number of other friends of vivid and robust images which each of them have in their hearts, allowing maintenance of deep connection between them. This theme arises in his very first letter to Lanfranc and continues throughout his career. I will cite just a few short representative passages. He writes to Lanfranc: "my devoted soul will certainly not be drawn away from you ... you cannot altogether escape him who your carry within you: indeed, you are not able to desert him who follows you wherever you go and embraces you wherever he may be."⁷² He tells Odo

⁶⁹ Ep 130, 305–306. See also, however, Ep. 84.

⁷⁰ Cf. Ep. 46, 71, and 189.

⁷¹ Ep. 189, 111.

⁷² Ep. 1, 73.

and Lanzo that his soul “by loving you ... impressed a clear image of you on itself. By this, despite your absence, you are always present to me.”⁷³ In his first letter to his lifelong friend and correspondent Gundulf, “soul most beloved of my soul” he tells him: “wherever you go, my love follows you; and wherever I may be, my longing for you embraces you.” Gundulf furnishes to us a particularly interesting and exemplary case for understanding Anselm’s views on friendship. He is eventually elevated to Bishop of Rochester, in which position he becomes Anselm’s right-hand man and representative of his affairs in his exile. Letters continue throughout their lives, and though many of the later letters seem entirely taken up with business details, their mutual love remains a steady undercurrent, as one of the later letters shows: “In everything which concerns me and our affairs, I perceive that you speak and act as you should as prudently and as vigorously as you can, and with the most true love. Moreover I am certain that with God’s help, your good will towards me, as it has never failed since it first began, so it will never fail as long as you live.”⁷⁴ Advice given in an earlier letter, written not long after Gundulf’s elevation to bishop and Anselm’s election to abbot, sets this in context. “Whoever loves anyone or profits him ... it is much more important for him to hold on to that very charity than to distinguish himself to the other through his charity.”⁷⁵

In their early correspondence, he consoles Gundulf, who evidently complains of their lack of recent correspondence: “How could I forget you? How could someone imprinted on my mind like a waxen seal slip out of my memory? ... you have my thoughts with you all the time ... we are aware that we are in each other’s minds.”⁷⁶ His next letter to him advises: “But what will my letter tell you that you do not know, you my second soul? Go into the secret place of your heart⁷⁷ and consider the affection of your true love and you will learn the love of your true friend.”⁷⁸ A later one adds:

Since your soul and my soul can never bear to be apart from each other but are incessantly entwined together, nothing of ourselves is lacking to the other except that we are not present to one an-

⁷³ Ep. 2, 75.

⁷⁴ Ep. 330, 48–49.

⁷⁵ Ep. 91, 235.

⁷⁶ Ep. 4, 81.

⁷⁷ This echoes the injunction at the beginning of P 1: “flee for a moment your occupations, steal yourself away a little from your tumultuous thoughts. Cast away now your onerous cares, and put off your laborious undertakings. For a little while abandon yourself to God and rest a little while in him. ‘Enter into the chamber’ of your mind, exclude everything other than God and what will aid you in seeking Him, and ‘the door closed’ seek Him,” 97.

⁷⁸ Ep. 16, 103.

other physically. But why do I describe my love to you in a letter when you keep the real image of it carefully in the ark of your heart? For what is your love for me but the image of my love for you?⁷⁹

It should be acknowledged that some commentators have interpreted Anselm's language and conception of friendship in ways opposed to the interpretation advanced here. The interpretations of the two authors I engage briefly here bear some affinity with that of Sir R. W. Southern, a scholar with whom any Anselm exegete would not want to differ except on strong grounds. Brian Patrick McGuire, advances two important claims. First, he maintains that Anselm developed a deep and truly personal friendship only with Osborn (and perhaps Gilbert Crispin). After Osborn's death, "it was emotionally safer, as well as intellectually more attractive, to love all the monks and not any one in particular And when he spoke of himself as lover, he meant more the idea of the person as a soul to be saved for eternal bliss than the flesh and blood reality of an individual human being."⁸⁰ Second, he discerns in Anselm's *Letters* "a typically Anselmian pattern of friendship: massive statements of love at the beginning, leading to misinterpretations and misunderstandings and false expectations; then a series of more careful explanations, many excuses for not writing, and clarification of the matter. The third stage [involves] transition from emotion to practical and didactic matters."⁸¹ Interestingly, McGuire attributes this stance on friendship to Anselm's metaphysical commitments: "like the true platonist and Christian that he was, Anselm was constantly starting with the individual and moving away into the abstract and the immaterial."⁸² Mary-Rose Barral takes this line of interpretation even further. She asks: "Is the friendship of Saint Anselm a truly personal relation, or is it a collective kind of relation wherein friends are not really felt to be individual and unique, as the notion of friendship must intend?"⁸³ Her answer is that Anselm "did not seem aware of the utter individuality of human beings, each of whom is uniquely a self,

⁷⁹ Ep. 41, 144; see also Ep. 59, 68. He later writes similarly to Boso (who he casts as his dialogue partner in *Cur Deus Homo*): "the kindness of your love for me knows the kindness of my love for you, and my affection for you knows your affection for me. Each one knows the secret feelings of the other through his own, since true sincerity understands true sincerity, and genuine experience allows no doubt to arise in either of us." Ep. 209, 154.

⁸⁰ B. McGuire, "Love, Friendship and Sex in the Eleventh Century: The Experience of Anselm," *Studia Theologica* 28 (1974): 127.

⁸¹ B. McGuire, "Love, Friendship and Sex in the Eleventh Century," 130.

⁸² B. McGuire, "Love, Friendship and Sex in the Eleventh Century," 150.

⁸³ M.-R. Barral, "Reflections on Anselm's Friendship and *Conversatio*," *Anselm Studies* 2 (1988), 174.

incommunicable as a being in her/her selfhood, and yet made to be with, that is, basically related to every other human being in the cosmos.”⁸⁴

Several points need be made in response. First, it is not necessary to counterpose Anselm’s appreciation for the universal and eternal against human personal individuality; not only does this impose a false dichotomy on Anselm’s thought,⁸⁵ it seems to run entirely contrary to his emphases on at least four major doctrines found in his work: the unique value of every rational being; God’s all-encompassing wisdom arranging all things, i.e. all individual things providentially; the reality of the individual human being in the divine mind; and, God’s love (than which no greater could be thought), by which He willingly dies and waits upon the individual sinner (addressing him in Anselm’s own *Prayers*). Second, it seems strange to juxtapose “a truly personal relation” and “a collective kind of relation” against each other as if they were mutually exclusive possibilities. In Anselm’s depictions of perfect friendship, for him not an ideal but a reality in heaven, these complement and augment each other. Third, McGuire’s comment about Platonism and Christianity is particularly telling. One can arguably maintain that some varieties of Platonism fit his description. It would be very difficult to find any genuine Christianity that did, and I would argue that this is precisely one of the points on which the Christianity of *Christian Platonism* becomes determinative and steers Platonism along personalist vectors.

To close here, I will point out just three things. First, it is significant that in Anselm’s works, the mediatory efficacy and agency of images of persons becomes manifest only when in addition to human intellectual powers, volitional and affective powers are involved through love, desire, or charity. Second, through loving and being loved, we come more and more fully to participate in that divine attribute of love, thus *in* God, and to be incorporated into an economy of persons. We also become, in a limited way, more like God, who possesses every being’s perfect reality of in his mind, by how we conduct ourselves with the image of the friend. What we do through love with the image of the other person enacts, and perhaps purifies and enhances, the image of God in us. Third, the Anselmian itinerary of the human mind to God clearly envisions human relationships mediated through images of persons as a normal and integral component, and a few more words need be said about this.

Through the images of other persons, we human beings develop not only a psychological *inner* life but a full, spiritual, supernatural *interior* life. David Moss notes that classical pagan discourses conceptualizing friendship

⁸⁴ M.-R. Barral, “Reflections on Anselm’s Friendship and *Conversatio*,” 178.

⁸⁵ For discussion of Anselm on friendship more attuned with Anselm’s metaphysics and moral theory, see A. Fiske, “Saint Anselm and Friendship,” *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 259–280.

undergo transformation in Christian authors, so that for instance, Gregory the Great's and Isidore's definitions both involve "some form of interiorization of the other in the self which yields a grammar of identity—a felt experience of unitive recognition and purpose Friendship thus involves the *vie intérieure* . . ."⁸⁶ This dynamic also has a necessarily social dimension. The circles of those related to one through love, and through such images, may also expand to an entire community, as it does when Anselm writes to the monks of Bec:

If not all of you know this [i.e. Anselm's love for them] from experience, for God has increased your numbers since I have left you, learn it from those who do know and have experienced it. Consequently let your charity not doubt at all that as I have loved the root, so I love the branches, however much they may multiply, and in my heart I embrace and love all the sons of my mother [i.e. the monastery at Bec], in the first-born and those born after me, as brothers born of the same mother. Therefore, I beg and beseech all of you equally that the memory and love of me in the hearts of those who have it may not cool down and that it may be enkindled and sustained in the minds of those who do not know me.⁸⁷

Expanding this model, we ought also think of the community of the saints, with whom Anselm enters into such intimate contact in his *Prayers*, providing us means for cultivating similarly richly image-mediated relationships with them. And finally, in an Anselmian perspective, like all realities, it ought to be situated within the all-encompassing economy of images, intelligibility, and love of the Trinity.

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⁸⁶ D. Moss, "Friendship: St. Anselm, Theoria, and the Convolution of Sense," in *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology*, ed. J. Milbank, C. Pickstock, and G. Ward (New York: Routledge, 1998), 130.

⁸⁷ Ep 205, 144.