

# Ring Structure in Chapters Six to Thirteen of Anselm's *Proslogion*

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The vast majority of scholarly writing on Anselm focuses on the *Proslogion*. However, an even greater majority of this focuses on chapters 2–4.<sup>1</sup> Even those who read the *Proslogion* in its entirety tend to move quickly from 2–4 to chapters 14–26.<sup>2</sup> Given the character of the arguments in chapters 2–4, concerning the formula “something than which nothing greater can be thought” (*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest*),<sup>3</sup> and the crisis of 14–18, when God is found to be “something greater than can be thought” (*quiddam maius quam cogitari possit*), it is understandable that chapters 5–13 have been largely neglected. The chapters seem, by comparison with those that precede and follow, fairly straightforward and in need of little (if any) interpretation.<sup>4</sup> However, these chapters are important precisely because they connect the apparent certainty of chapters 2–4 and the renewed doubt and dissatisfaction of chapters 14–18. The precise way in which they join these more famous moments of the work is the subject of this paper.

1. On Anselm's bibliography, see for example Jasper Hopkins' 42 page *Supplementary Anselm Bibliography* at <http://cla.umn.edu/sites/jhopkins/Anselmbibliography.pdf>. For two recent overviews of the scholarship on the argument of *Proslogion* 2–4, see Eileen Sweeney, “Anselm's *Proslogion*: The Desire for the Word,” *The Saint Anselm Journal* 1 (2003): 17–31 and Ian Logan, “‘Whoever understands this...’: On translating the *Proslogion*,” *New Blackfriars* 89 (2008): 560–74.

2. Examples of this include Gregory Schufreider, *Confessions of a Rational Mystic: Anselm's Early Writings* (Indiana: Purdue U Press, 1994), 113–239 and Jean-Luc Marion, “Is the Ontological Argument Ontological? The Argument According to Anselm and Its Metaphysical Interpretation According to Kant,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 30 (1992): 210–18.

3. Except where noted, I follow Charlesworth's translation in *St. Anselm's Proslogion*, translated with an introduction and philosophical commentary by M.J. Charlesworth (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame Press, 1979), and use Schmitt's Latin text found in the same edition.

4. In his commentary Charlesworth takes 25 pages to treat chapters 1–4, considering each chapter individually. In contrast, he treats chapters 8–11 collectively using only 25 words. He treats chapters 6–13 in 2 pages.

This paper treats the logic of chapters 6–13. In my view, chapter 5 is a transitional, introducing the considerations of 6–13 by drawing a conclusion from chapters 2–4 (that God is whatever is better to be than not to be). Chapter 14 plays a similar role, looking back on 6–13 in order to assess the soul's progress (“Have you found, O my soul, what you were seeking?”).<sup>5</sup> Commentators agree that 6–13 is a series of chapters that resolves apparent contradictions emerging from the certainty that God is whatever is better to be than not to be. There is also agreement that these chapters amount to positive (though paradoxical) knowledge of God's attributes.<sup>6</sup> To this general analysis I would add the following specification. I argue that these chapters are arranged in a ring structure according to the subjects of each chapter.

#### AN UNNOTICED RING COMPOSITION

Anselm would have encountered various examples of ring structure, *inclusio* and *chiasmus* in his reading of Scripture, Augustine and Cicero.<sup>7</sup> The *Proslogion* contains scriptural chiasms (e.g., in Chapter 1, *Quaero vultum tuum; vultum tuum, domine, requiro*, echoes Psalm 26.8), and displays a numerological ring structure in the division into parts.<sup>8</sup> The work itself is an example of *inclusio*, in that the ‘end’ of the work is present in the beginning; that which Anselm tells us in the preface “had given me such joy to discover” (*me gaudebam invenisse*), is not simply the formula of chapter 2.<sup>9</sup> The *unum argumentum* is also the single, continuous argument that is unfolded in the rest of the *Proslogion*, such that Anselm concludes with the exclamation in chapter 26: “I have discovered a joy that is complete and more than complete” (*Inveni namque gaudium quoddam plenum, et plus quam plenum*). To these examples of parallelism I argue should be added another that Anselm develops in chapters 6–13.

The chapters were given the following titles by Anselm:<sup>10</sup>

5. That this is the character of the chapter might explain why Charlesworth's commentary does not treat chapter 14.

6. I follow Sandra Visser and Thomas Williams, *Anselm* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2009), 95, who note that although “the expression ‘divine attributes’ is not an altogether felicitous one,” it is standard and avoids some very infelicitous ways of speaking about these chapters.

7. On rings in Scripture, see Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale U Press, 2007); on a ring in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, see Paul MacKendrick *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 55; on chiasms in Augustine, see Robert McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent: Augustine, Boethius, Anselm and Dante* (Washington: Catholic U of America Press, 2006), 36–44.

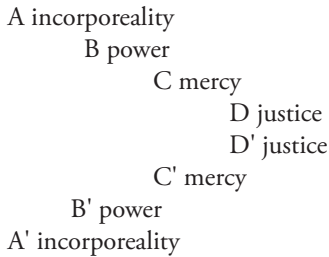
8. McMahon, *Understanding the Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 166.

9. On Barth's claim that the *argumentum* is not the formula in 2–4, see Logan, “Whoever understands this,” 564.

10. McMahon, *op. cit.* 165. Here and in the discussion of chapter 6 I depart from Charlesworth's translation, using ‘sensible’ for *sensibilis*.

- 6) How He is sensible (*sensibilis*) although He is not a body (*non sit corpus*)
- 7) How He is omnipotent (*omnipotens*) although He is cannot do many things
- 8) How He is both merciful (*misericors*) and impassible (*impassibilis*)
- 9) How the all-just and supremely just One (*totus iustus et summe iustus*) spares the wicked and justly has mercy on the wicked
- 10) How He justly punishes (*iuste punit*) and justly spares (*iuste parcat*) the wicked
- 11) How 'all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth', (*misericordia et veritas*), and yet how 'the Lord is just in all His ways'
- 12) That God is the very life by which He lives (*deus sit ipsa vita qua vivit*) and that the same holds for like attributes
- 13) How He alone is limitless and eternal (*incircumscriptus et aeternus*), although other spirits are also limitless and eternal

The topics of these chapters form the following ring:



The purpose of the ring becomes clear when it is shown that there are in fact two kinds of paradoxes in these chapters—real and apparent. Chapters 6–9 present apparent paradoxes that are dissolved by demonstrating that there is merely a difference of degree in the incorporeal perception, power, mercy and justice that belong to God and the human. Chapters 10–13 present real paradoxes that are only resolved by conceding that God's justice, mercy, power and incorporeality are different in kind from their human forms and belong to God in unique ways. Thus, while chapters 6 and 13 are connected thematically, the parallelism created by the ring relates them as antitheses. This relation is reproduced in 7 and 12, 8 and 11, and in 9 and 10. In each case the parallel elements of the ring set up a comparison of the human and the divine forms of the attributes.<sup>11</sup> The first four chapters are, in a sense,

11. Cf. Wayne Hankey, "Secundum rei vim vel secundum cognoscendum facultatem: Knower and Known in the *Consolation of Boethius* and the *Proslogion* of Anselm," in *Medieval Philosophy and the Classical Tradition in Islam, Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Inglis (London: Curzon, 2002), 137–38.

fully human versions of the attributes whose maximum is ascribed to God.<sup>12</sup> The appearance of contradiction emerges from the initial comparison of imperfect forms of one or both of the apparently irreconcilable attributes, but is dissolved when the perfection of each is made clear. The next four chapters are fully divine, insofar as the attributes which belong to God differ no longer in degree but in kind from their human forms.<sup>13</sup> Bound together in the ring, in the form of a *chi*, Anselm certainly has in mind the incarnational associations of the *chiasmus* as a cross, representing the humanity and divinity of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

#### CHAPTERS SIX & THIRTEEN: INCORPOREAL PERCEPTION AND UNLIMITED INCORPOREALITY

Chapter 6 argues for a definition of *sensibilis* that can be ascribed to God without contradicting his incorporeality. Anselm substitutes *sentire* for *sensibilis*, and, I suggest, adopts Augustine's definition of *percipere* for *sentire*, in order to support the claim that any kind of knowing is in some way a kind of sensing.<sup>15</sup>

In a recent article Ian Logan has shown to what extent problems of translation and interpretation are mutually implicated in the proliferation of mistaken versions of Anselm's argument.<sup>16</sup> While the importance of a clear and precise understanding of chapter 4 for a reading of the *Proslogion* is evident, there are other chapters which have been perennially misinterpreted and mistranslated. I shall consider chapter 6, upon which depends our understanding of the structure of chapters 6–13, and therefore the way that Anselm moves from certainty (chapter 5) to despair (chapters 14–18).<sup>17</sup>

12. Sweeney, "Anselm's *Proslogion*: The Desire for the Word," 29, notes a similar 'shift' from human to divine, but locates it in chapter 11: "From here on, understanding can no longer be a positive guide; the chain of argument can no longer be from what we think it is better to be to God."

13. Charlesworth, *op. cit.* 80, notes the degree/kind distinction in his commentary on chapter 12.

14. On the significance of the chiasmic structures for Medieval Christians, see McMahon, *Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 36–44.

15. Anselm uses *sentire*, *percipere* and *cognoscere* as synonyms in chapter 17.

16. Logan *op. cit.*

17. I begin by noting that while some interpreters refer to chapter 6 as being about omniscience (see McMahon, *Meditative Ascent*, 167 and Schufreider, *Confessions*, 210), I do not think that this is the case. First, omniscience is a premise and not a conclusion in the argument of chapter 6. Also, the idea that omniscience is the topic seems to spring from two problematic assumptions: A) that Anselm is dealing with the separate and more specific problem of how God knows sensible particulars; B) that the argument of chapter 6 has a parallel in chapter 7, which concerns omnipotence. As far as A), Anselm does not in fact conclude that God knows sensible particulars *qua* sensible and particular. In terms of B), even if God is *sensibilis*, this does

In his book on the *Proslogion*, Logan gives a standard but potentially problematic reading of chapter 6. After a very detailed and important analysis of chapters 1–5 Logan says of chapter 6 that:

*Anselm equates sensibility with knowing, on the basis that the senses exist for a kind of knowing and that therefore it is not inappropriate to say that knowing is a kind of sensibility. The way in which God is said to be sensible is related to, but distinct from, the way in which bodily creatures are said to be sensible. God can be called sensible, because he knows, and supremely sensible because He is omniscient (italics mine).<sup>18</sup>*

It should strike us as incongruous that after putting forward one of the most intriguing arguments in the history of philosophy, Anselm would make such a claim. To say that senses are *for a kind of knowing* can in no way entail the idea that knowing is a kind of sensibility. Even if Anselm argued that the senses were not *for* but in fact a *kind of knowing*, there is no valid way to invert this, i.e. to say that because sensing is a kind of knowing, therefore knowing is a kind of sensing. In fact, as I argue below, Anselm equates sensing with knowing, and also says that senses exist for knowing, but the former does not depend upon or follow from the latter.

Anselm does equate *sentire* and *cognoscere*. Indeed, his very strong conclusion depends upon this equivalence. However, Anselm does not equate them on the basis of the idea that *sentire non nisi ad cognoscendum est*. This connection can only produce the heavily qualified sense of *cognoscere* as *sentire* that Anselm describes in the conclusion of the same sentence: “whatever in some manner knows can be said not inappropriately (*non inconvenienter*) to sense.” That God is *summe sensibilis* because he *summe omnia cognoscit* only follows from the unequivocal equation of *sentire* and *cognoscere*. Anselm does not say God is said to be sensible *aliquo modo non inconvenienter*, but truly (*vere*) in this way (*eo modo*), i.e., in one of two ways, and in the better of two ways. The rank order of the two modes is clear from Anselm’s assertion earlier

not mean that he is omnipotent (i.e., there could be other things he does not know). While chapter 7 deals with power itself, and therefore its conclusion entails omnipotence, chapter 6 is not about knowledge itself, but a particular mode of knowing. The conclusion that he is omnipotent is not a corollary of the conclusion that God is *sensibilis*.

18. Ian Logan, *Reading Anselm’s Proslogion: The History of Anselm’s Argument and its Significance Today* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 99. In his commentary on the *Proslogion*, Charlesworth epitomises chapter 6 by saying that “St. Anselm here makes the point that God is ‘perceptive’ (‘sensibilis’) in the sense that He knows all things, though since He is not corporeal *He does not know through the senses as we do*” (italics mine), 79. Would Anselm agree that we know through the senses in anything but a highly qualified sense? After all, Anselm has just expounded a certain knowledge of God that depends on nothing but an understanding of the belief that God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived. Whatever is known through the senses must be a lesser object and known in a lesser way. Cf. Katherin Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury* (New York: Edwin Mellon Press, 1997), 172.

in chapter 6 that *spiritus* is better than body, and thus spiritual perception is better than corporeal perception.

Chapter 6 consists of three conditional sentences and a conclusion that follows from the third of these. The first condition (hereafter C1) follows from the conclusion of chapter five, that God is whatever it is better to be than not to be. Anselm asks, “How are you able to perceive if you are not a body?” (*Quomodo sensibilis si non es corpus?*). The protasis, ‘if you are not a body,’ introduces a simple condition. Since “the form of the main clause (apodosis) is determined in some degree by the nature of the subordinate clause (protasis) upon the truth of which the whole statement depends,”<sup>19</sup> and since the truth of the protasis is undeniable, it is clear that Anselm’s rhetorical purpose here is to make the paradox seem real.

The second simple condition (hereafter C2) begins with *nam* and introduces the reasoning behind C1: “For if only corporeal things (*sola corporea*) are capable of perception (*sensibilia*), since the senses are concerned with the body and are in the body, how are you sensible, since you are not a body but the highest spirit, which is better than a body?”

The third simple condition (hereafter C3) is connected to C2 by the conjunction *sed* (*sed si sentire non nisi cognoscere aut non nisi ad cognoscendum est*). C3 introduces the crucial substitution of the infinitive *sentire* for the adjective *sensibilis*. This substitution is used to correct the implicit error in C2. The problem with C2 is that it elides the truth of the matter, at least according to Anselm as a follower of Augustine. C2 makes *sensibilis* appear to be an attribute of bodies, thus a *corpus* is the *sine qua non* of being *sensibilis*, capable of perceiving. This is corrected by the substitution of *sentire*, and implicitly endorses and depends upon Augustine’s definition of sensation: “sensation is the soul’s not being unaware of the body’s experience” (*non latere animam quod patitur corpus*) (*De quantitate animae* 23.41).<sup>20</sup>

The protasis of C3 contains two ways of speaking of *sentire*: A) *sentire non nisi cognoscere* and B) *sentire non nisi ad cognoscendum*. That these are two distinct senses of *sentire* is required by the conclusion in the apodosis as well as the conclusion which follows from C3. In the apodosis the conclusion is that “whatever in some way knows (*cognoscit*) can be said not unsuitably in some manner to sense (*sentire*).” To say that all knowing is some kind of sensing is only possible if the *aut* in C3 is taken, not as disjunctive (and thus

19. Allen and Greenough’s *New Latin Grammar for Schools and Colleges*, ed. J.B. Greenough et al. (Boston: The Athenaeum Press, 1888), 321.

20. See also: “Now sensation belongs not to the body, but to the soul acting through the body” (*sentire non est corporis, sed animae per corpus*) (*De genesi ad litteram*, 3.5). Cf. Boethius’ metrical critique of Stoic materialist epistemology in *Consolation*, 5m4.

exclusive) or restrictive, but as copulative.<sup>21</sup> This is in fact how Anselm uses *aut* throughout the *Proslogion*.

If the *aut* is exclusive, the conclusion does not follow from either A or B. If it is A, and to sense (*sentire*) is to know (*cognoscere*) *tout court*, it is strange that the apodosis requires such heavy qualifications (*non inconvenienter dicitur aliquo modo*). In addition, if *sentire* is not distinct from *cognoscere*, then even animals would be said to *know*, and this is not properly said of animals. There must be some distinction between the way animals, humans, and the divine know. If the disjunct implies B, that *sentire* is *ad cognoscendum*, then it would not follow that “whatever in any way knows also in some way senses.” It seems clear that just because sensing is for knowing, this does not mean that all knowing is sensing or involves sensing. Surely there could be forms of knowing that do not involve sensation. Thus, from neither alternative does the conclusion logically follow.

If the *aut* is restrictive, the correction or specification introduced by *ad cognoscendum* would mean that *cognoscere* is an infinitive of purpose, i.e., to sense is only to know, *sentire non nisi cognoscere* actually means sensing is *in order to* know, or *for* knowing. This is essentially the same as reducing the disjunction to B, from which alone the conclusion does not follow. The restrictive sense of *aut* would clarify that the two infinitives are not being used in the same way, i.e., sensing (*sentire* used as a noun) is in order to know (*cognoscere* as an infinitive of purpose), but would not allow the conclusion that is drawn.

The third possibility is the only one which makes sense of the apodosis, and the only one from which the conclusion of the chapter can be validly drawn. The *aut* must be copulative, connecting two distinct meanings of *sentire* that together lead to the conclusion. But what does it mean to say that *sentire* is both to know and for knowing? It seems that Anselm has in mind Augustine's definition of the two senses of a similar verb, *percipere*.<sup>22</sup> In the *De magistro*, Augustine states that “For everything we perceive (*percipimus*), we perceive either through a sense of the body (*sensu corporis*) or by the

21. While “*aut*, or, excludes the alternative” (Allen and Greenough, 201), according to Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, *aut* is not only exclusive or restrictive (“to restrict or correct an expression which is too general or inaccurate”) but can also be copulative, “to connect to something more important than which is less so.”

22. Anselm himself uses *sentire* and *percipere* (and even *cognoscere*) as synonyms in the *Proslogion*. In chapter 17, the soul “looks all about, and does not see Your beauty. It listens, and does not hear Your harmony. It smells, and it does not sense Your fragrance. It tastes, and does not recognize Your savour. It feels, and does not sense Your softness” (*Circumspicit enim et non videt pulchritudinem tuam. Auscultat et non audit harmoniam tuam. Olfacit et non percipit odorem tuum. Gustat et non cognoscit saporem tuum. Palpat et non sentit lenitatem tuam*).

mind (*mente*). The former we call sensible (*sensibilia*), the latter, intelligible (*intelligibilia*) (*mag.*, 12.39).<sup>23</sup>

Anselm has in mind perception by the mind (*mente*) when he equates *sentire* and *cognoscere*. This sense of *sentire* as mental perception (to think, deem, judge, opine, imagine, suppose) is frequently used by Cicero (see especially *Tusculans*, book 1). For the sense of *sentire* as *ad cognoscendum* Anselm has in mind perception through the bodily senses. For Augustine, to say that sense perception is knowledge requires some qualification. In the *De quantitate animae* he is clear that “sense perception and recognition are two different things” (*Aliud est ergo sentire, aliud cognoscere*) (*quant.*, 24.45). Later in the argument he clarifies the definition of sensation and knowledge:

Although sensation (*sensus*) and knowledge (*scientia*) are two different things, the element of “not being unaware” (*non latere*) is common to both, just as being an animal is common to man and the brute, even though enormous differences separate them. For whatever is apparent to the soul, either through the body’s organism (*temperationem corporis*) or through pure intelligence (*intelligentiae puritatem*), of that it is not unaware. Sensation (*sensus*) lays claim to the first; knowledge (*scientia*), to the second. (*quant.*, 30.58)

Since *lateo* has the sense of ‘unknown,’ there is for Augustine a heavily qualified sense in which animals can be said to know in virtue of having sensation, if to sense is for the soul to be ‘not unaware’ (*non latere*). There is, however, also a way in which for Augustine sensation can be for knowledge. While there exists “This fivefold power of sensation in the body by which beasts as well as we sense bodily appearances and movements” (*Trin.*, 12.13.20),<sup>24</sup> at the same time they are not identical, for:

When anything is taken up in pursuit of this knowledge from things that belong to the outer man (*ad exteriorem hominem*), it is taken up for the lesson it can provide to foster rational knowledge (*rationalem scientiam*); and thus the rational use of things we have in common with non-rational animals belongs to the inner man (*ad interiorem hominem*), and cannot properly be said to be common to us and non-rational animals (*irrationalibus animalibus*). (*Trin.*, 13.1.4)

23. The Latin text is from Augustine, *De magistro, De libero arbitrio*, trans. with introduction and notes, Goulven Madec (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1976). English translation is from Augustine, *The Greatness of the Soul, The Teacher*, trans. and annot. Joseph M. Colleran (Westminster: The Newman Press, 1964).

24. For Augustine, there is no sense in which animals have *scientia*: “So, see whether you are now convinced that brute animals have no knowledge (*feras non habere scientiam*), and that the semblance of knowledge (*imaginem scientiae*) which strikes us in them is in its entirety merely the product of sense perception” (*quant.*, 28.56). There is a difference between human and brute sensation because “we also have a third thing, like the head or eye of the soul, or however reason and understanding might be more aptly described; and this animals do not have” (*lib. arb.*, 2.6).



Between these two senses of *sentire* borrowed from Augustine's use of *percipere* we have a sufficiently extensive definition of *sentire* to be able to say that whatever knows in some way senses. For whether the knowing is by the mind or through the body, *sentire* and *cognoscere* are equivalents. In the same way, Augustine's distinction of two kinds of perception (*percipere*) comprehends both the corporeal senses and the mind, and it follows that for Augustine, to say that *omnia quae percipimus, aut sensu corporis aut mente percipimus* is equivalent to saying *percipere non nisi cognoscere aut ad cognoscendum est*.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, in the apodosis of C3, Anselm has found a corrective to the error in C2, and therefore a way to dissolve the apparent paradox of C1. Following the heavily qualified apodosis of C3, Anselm draws the unequivocal conclusion that God is sensible in the highest degree (*summe sensibilis*) because he knows all things in the highest degree (*summe omnia cognosci[re]*). The strength of this assertion comes from the fact that it is a conclusion based on the first meaning of *sentire*, i.e., *sentire = cognoscere*. Anselm does not say that God can be said, not unsuitably, to be *sensibilis*, because God knows. Rather, Anselm says that truly (*vere*) God is *summe sensibilis*. The implication is that not only do animals know *minime* compared to God, but they also perceive *minime*. The assumption of C2 has been completely inverted. Animal perception does not occur because of the body, but despite the body. Anselm ranks the two modes of perception in virtue of the earlier assertion that *spiritus* is better than *corpus*. Thus incorporeal perception is superior to corporeal perception.<sup>26</sup> What is important for my argument is that in

25. For Augustine *sentire* or *percipere* by the mind alone (*mente*) is human: "For those inquirers to whom God has given the ability, whose judgment is not clouded by stubbornness, these and many other such examples suffice to show that the order and truth of numbers has nothing to do with the senses of the body (*ad sensus corporis non pertinere*), but that it does exist, complete and immutable, and can be seen in common by everyone who uses reason" (*lib. arb.*, 2.8). This is how Augustine can explain the fact that by comparison human 'perception' is better than animal, even though "as a matter of fact, many brute animals have keener sense perception than we" (*quant.*, 28.54).

26. This is similar to conclusions in Cicero and Boethius as well as Augustine. As Cicero argues, "Surely objects of far greater purity and transparency (*puriora et dilucidiora*) will be discovered when the day comes on which the mind is free and has reached its natural home. For in our present state, although the apertures which, as has been said, are open from the body to the soul (*animum a corpore*), have been fashioned by nature with cunning workmanship, yet they are in a manner fenced in with a compound of earthly particles: when however, there shall be soul and nothing else, no physical barrier will hinder its perception of the true nature of everything" (*cum autem nihil erit praeter animum, nulla res obiecta impedit, quo minus percipiat, quale quidque sit*) (*Tusc.*, 1.47). Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, trans. J.E. King (Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1996). Boethius has a similar account of intellectual perception: "Reason, too, when it regards some universal, without using the imagination or the senses grasps the imaginable and sensible aspects" (*Cons.*, 5.4.34). Translations are from Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S.J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1997). Book, section and line

distinguishing between two modes of perceiving, Anselm has made God and animals the extremes of a continuum. If God is *summe sensibilis*, and by implication the animal *minime sensibilis*, then the human is more properly said to be on the side of God. While not *summe sensibilis*, the human knows rationally and intellectually, not through the senses. Thus, God is merely the summit of incorporeal perception, with the human as an expression of a lower degree of, but not a different kind of, incorporeal perception. Thus incorporeal perception is the divine attribute ascribed to God.

In chapter 13 Anselm does distinguish between God and the human with respect to incorporeality. While it is clear that God is eternal in a unique way, there is a question about his unbounded or unlimited spirit, *spiritus incircumscriptus*. How is God unlimited in a different sense than created spirits, whose souls (unlike merely corporeal creatures) can be wholly in more than one place at a time? The difference is illustrated in terms of perception (*sentire*): while perception is possible for created natures because the soul can be wholly present in more than one place at a time, it cannot, like God's *spiritus*, be present everywhere at once. Thus while bodies are limited and God is singularly unlimited, created spirits are both limited and unlimited.

It is, I think, significant that when Anselm distinguishes between the divine incorporeality and the incorporeal created *spiritus* of the human he does not do so in terms of an intellectual difference but in terms of our ability to sense. It is important to note that chapter 6 does not require that God and man know in the same way, only that they do not know in the same way, i.e., they do not know via a body: God because he does not have one, the human because the rational soul, properly speaking, knows without the aid of the senses. We do not know how God knows (in the *Proslogion* Anselm does not call God a mind, or rational or intellectual, although *Monologion* 31 intimates this), but we do know that it is in the highest degree and without a body. Similarly, he perceives in some way in the highest degree and without a body. However, in *Proslogion* chapter 1 Anselm asserts that the human *mens*, while corrupted and distorted, is in fact an *imago dei*. Anselm does not wish to make an absolute distinction between the divine and the human in terms

references are to the Latin text of *De consolazione philosophiae*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (Leipzig: Teubner, 2000). Anselm himself suggests that this relation between sensation and higher, more complete forms of knowing is characteristic of the human. As McMahon argues, "he begins wanting to understand (*intelligere*) what he believes about God (2), but by the middle of the work (14) he is dissatisfied with understanding and wants to experience, or "feel" (*sentire*) God. Three chapters later (17) he laments the inability of his five senses to experience God. Yet after he apprehends God as the supreme and encompassing good (22–23), he raises his "whole intellect" (*totum intellectum*: 24, S 117) to apprehend the superabundant goods of the body and soul in the joy of the blessed (25). These goods *encompass, yet far surpass, what the narrator's five senses desire in chapter 17* (italics mine) (*Medieval Meditative Ascent*, 171).

of knowing, and so in chapter 13 Anselm makes an absolute distinction between God and created spirits which puts the human on the side of the animal, i.e., in terms of the soul's limitation with respect to the body.<sup>27</sup>

CHAPTERS SEVEN & TWELVE: POWER *PER ALIUD* AND *PER SE*

Omnipotence is clearly not a human attribute. However, chapters 7 and 12 are concerned not with omnipotence *per se*, but with the nature of ability (*posse* or *potentia*) in general. Chapters 7 and 12 present two different notions of power: one common to God and the human, the other exclusive to God.

In chapter 7 it is a notion of power or ability (*posse*) common to man and God that is used to explain how God is omnipotent (*omnipotens*) even though he is not able to do all things (*omnia non potest*).<sup>28</sup> Anselm enumerates three examples of things God can not do: be corrupted (*corrumpi*); lie (*mentiri*); and make the true false.<sup>29</sup> The solution to this apparent problem is the recognition that human ability is twofold. We are able to do things by means of impotence (*impotentia*) as well as by means of power (*potentia*). God is not able to do anything through impotence (*per impotentiam*). Real ability, for both man and God, depends upon *potentia*. The confusion arises from the fact that we too casually refer to inabilities (i.e., things we do not through power but through impotence) as abilities.

While chapter 7 corrects the false impression that there are things that God can not do, it raises another problem that is not resolved until chapter 12. An unstated premise of Anselm's argument is that God does all things *per potentiam*.<sup>30</sup> Anselm does not state this because it would immediately raise

27. I note that Anselm does not discuss angelic natures, which would seem to complicate this distinction.

28. Anselm presents similar arguments about human power in *De libri arbitrii* (ch. 1 ff.). Augustine and Boethius also provide accounts of power with respect to the human which make clear that certain apparent abilities are in fact the consequence of *impotentia* rather than *potentia*. Anselm's argument here recalls Augustine's account of the power his old will had over him (*Confessions*, 8.5.10–11 and 8.9.20–8.10.22), as well as Lady Philosophy's conclusion in the *Consolation*: "But evil men, you will say, are able to do things. Not even I would deny that, but this ability of theirs is derived not from their strength but from their weakness. For they can do evil things, which they would not be able to do, had they been able to persevere in their performance of good things" (*Cons.*, 4.2.37–38). She goes on to argue that "he who can only do good things can do all things, and they cannot do all things who *can* do evil" (*Cons.*, 4.2.42).

29. In fact it is not clear that the third of these is addressed in Anselm's solution.

30. The reconstructed argument is: All beings that do all things through power are omnipotent. God does all things through power. Therefore, God is omnipotent. Anselm concludes *Proslogion* 7 by saying 'therefore (*ergo*) God is omnipotent,' but he phrases the minor premise negatively (God is not able to do anything through impotence) and leaves the major premise unstated.

the question: is this power other than God? This is precisely the question raised and immediately answered in the *Monologion*, where in chapter 16 Anselm reflects upon the divine attributes in a similar way.

But perhaps when he is said to be just or great or something like that, this does not reveal what he is, but rather what sort of thing he is or how great he is. For it seems that all these things are said through a quality or a quantity (*per qualitatem quippe vel quantitatem*). After all, everything that is just is just through justice (*per iustitiam iustum est*), and so on for similar things. Therefore, that supreme nature is just precisely through justice (*per iustitiam*). So it seems that the supremely good substance is said to be just in virtue of his participation in a quality, namely justice.<sup>31</sup>

Anselm immediately points out the difficulty that, if this is the case, the supremely good substance is just through another (*per aliud*) and not through itself (*per se*). This is contrary to the truth already discerned (*perspectae*) in the earlier chapters of the *Monologion*.<sup>32</sup> However, while man is not able to be justice (*esse iustitia*), but is able to have justice (*habere iustitiam*), the supreme essence is not properly (*non proprie*) said to have (*habere*) justice but to exist as justice (*existit iustitia*). The supreme essence is existent justice (*existens iustitia*). This is the same for all similar attributes.

What is raised as an obvious problem in *Monologion* 16 is passed over silently in *Proslogion* 7 in order to bring out the similarity between divine and human abilities (hence the wordplay involving *omnipotens*, *omnia posse*, *potentia* and *impotentia*). Anselm only brings out the difference asserted in *Monologion* 16 in *Proslogion* 12, when he asserts that whatever God is he is not through another (*per aliud*) but through himself (*per seipsum*). He is the life by which he lives, the wisdom by which he is wise and the goodness by which he is good. Anselm does not call life, wisdom and goodness powers.<sup>33</sup> However, his account of how God is living, wise and good echoes chapter 7. The ablatives (*vita qua vivis*, *sapientia qua sapis*, *bonitas qua bonus es*) and the

31. I follow Schmitt's Latin text of the *Monologion*, with English translations from Anselm, *Monologion and Proslogion with the Replies of Gaunilo and Anselm*, trans. with introduction and notes, Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1995).

32. See chapters 1–4 and the reflections on *per se* and *ex se* in chapter 5.

33. That these are powers, and for the human borrowed or given, is an echo of Augustine, for example in the *Confessions* where he writes concerning the powers of life and sensation: "There exists another power (*vis*), not only that by which (*qua*) I give life to my body (*vivifico*), but also that by which I enable its senses to perceive (*sensifico*). The Lord has made this for me (*Confessions*, 10.7.11). See also *Confessions*, 10.17.26: "So great is the power of memory (*vis memoriae*), so great is the force of life (*vitae vis*) in a human being whose life is mortal." *Confessions*, trans. with an introduction and notes, Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1992). For the Latin I follow O'Donnell's Oxford text. Anselm, like Augustine, uses *potentia*, *potestas*, and *vis* interchangeably.

instrumental sense of *per teipsum* recall the ablatives *potentia* and *impotentia* and the *per impotentiam* of chapter 7. There, the human relation to power was to an external means, *potentia* itself.

Anselm concludes chapter 11 by recalling some of the attributes already treated (perceptive, omnipotent, merciful and impassible), and adds to the list living, wise and good. The latter are taken up in chapter 12. The difference between perception, power, mercy and justice on the one hand, and life, wisdom and goodness on the other, seems to have to do with a distinction between attributes that involve a relation to another and those that are self-related. Perception, power, mercy, and justice all imply an external orientation.<sup>34</sup> Life, wisdom and goodness are, if not simply, at least more clearly, self-related.<sup>35</sup> The move to the self-related attributes corresponds to, and makes explicit, the shift from attributes *secundum nos* (chapters 6–9) to those *secundum se* (chapters 10 and 11). Attributes such as life, wisdom and goodness are not only self-related, but *per deum ipsum*.

#### CHAPTERS EIGHT & ELEVEN: MERCY *SECUNDUM NOS* AND *SECUNDUM DEUM*

Chapter 8 involves the problem of God's mercy and impassibility. How can God be merciful if this literally means that he *suffers* with us (*compatior*)? Anselm's solution is that God is merciful in relation to us (*secundum nos*) and not in relation to himself (*secundum [s]e*). We feel the effect (*effectum*), yet He does not perceive (*senti[t]*) the affect (*affectum*). Thus, God is and is not merciful.

Anselm's formulation of the apparent paradox and its solution with respect to God is nearly identical to Seneca's formulation of the same problem in *De clementia*.<sup>36</sup> There Seneca distinguishes between mercy (*clementia*) and

34. Even impassibility is an attribute defined in relation to the ability of another to affect God.

35. The qualification of *bonitas*, that God is good to the good and to the bad, rather than contradicting this thesis, is consistent with it, insofar as goodness, in its self-relation, is indiscriminate and not determined by a relation to anything external.

36. I do not suggest (nor does my argument require) that Anselm received these arguments directly from Seneca, though his importance among late Ancient and Medieval Christian writers makes his influence, either direct or indirect, upon Anselm, possible. On Seneca's influence in the Middle Ages, see G.M. Ross, "Seneca's Philosophical Influence," *Seneca*, ed. C.D.N. Costa (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1974), 116–65 and Marcia Colish, *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985), 13–19. Southern cites Schmitt's note on the version of Anselm's famous formula in Seneca's *Quaestiones Naturales*. *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge U Press, 1990), 129. John Marenbon notes Seneca's *De Clementia* in relation to the discussion of *miserordia* in order to distinguish its sense in Seneca from Anselm's use. "Anselm: *Proslogion*," *Central Works of Philosophy Volume 1: Ancient and Medieval* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's U Press, 2005), 182.

pity (*miser cordia*).<sup>37</sup> Anselm uses *miser cordia* (perhaps simply in virtue of the Scriptural, in particular the Psalmic, echoes, and the wordplay between *miser cors* and *miser cordia*, which establishes the connection between the human and the divine at work in these chapters and the formula of chapter 2) and does not use *clementia*,<sup>38</sup> but the distinction he makes within *miser cordia* is the same.

For Seneca, mercy (*clementia*) is a virtue<sup>39</sup> and an imitation of the gods:<sup>40</sup> “Mercy means restraining the mind from vengeance when it has the power to take it, or the leniency of the superior towards an inferior in fixing punishment (*Clem.*, 2.3.1). Pity (*miser cordia*) is a vice that is incompatible with wisdom.

Pity is the sorrow of the mind (*aegritudo animi*) brought about by the sight of the distress of others, or sadness caused by the ills of others which it believes come undeservedly. But no sorrow befalls the wise man; his mind is serene (*serena eius mens est*), and nothing can happen to becloud it. Nothing, too, so much befits a man as superiority of mind; but the mind cannot at the same time be superior and sad. (*Clem.*, 2.5.4)

Thus, while Seneca distinguishes between *clementia* as an impassible virtue and *miser cordia* as a vice and a weakness, he notes that in terms of the effect perceived by the one to whom mercy or pity are shown, there is a significant resemblance.

Sorrow (*tristitia*) is not adapted to the discernment of fact, to the discovery of expedients, to the avoidance of dangers, or the weighing of justice; he, consequently, will not suffer pity (*ergo non miseretur*), because there cannot be pity without mental suffering. All else (*cetera omnia*) which I would have those who feel pity do, he will do gladly and with a lofty spirit; he will bring relief to another’s tears, but will not add his own. (*Clem.*, 2.6.1–2)

37. On *clementia* and *miser cordia* in Cicero and Seneca, see Susanna Morton Braund, “Praise and Protreptic in Early Imperial Panegyric: Cicero, Seneca, Pliny,” in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. Mary Whitby (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998), 53–76. Cf. Cicero’s translation of the Greek *eleos* in *Tusculans*, book 3 *passim*.

38. The word is not common in Augustine, which might explain its neglect by Anselm. Augustine uses *miser cordia* in *Confessions* and *De trinitate*. In *City of God* he prefers *miser cordia*, but uses *clemens* twice (1.6 and 21.17) and *clementia* once (22.17). The term had been associated with tyranny since the *clementia Caesaris*, however, David Konstan has argued persuasively against the idea that *clementia* was not generally regarded as a virtue. “Clemency as a Virtue,” *Classical Philology* (2005): 337–46.

39. See *Clem.*, 1.3.2: “No one of all the virtues is more seemly for a man, since none is more human” (*nullam ex omnibus virtutibus homini magis convenire, cum sit nulla humanior*). Text and translation are from Seneca, *Moral Essays*, vol. 1, trans. John Basore (Cambridge: Harvard U Press, 1928).

40. *Clem.*, 1.1.2; 1.5.7; 1.7.1; 1.7.2.

For Anselm as for Seneca, mercy and impassibility are compatible if the virtue of mercy produces an effect without suffering an affect. This notion of mercy, which Seneca calls *clementia* and Anselm calls *misericordia*, can be understood as a human virtue or in terms of the divine attribute reflected in the human virtue.

It is only when Anselm returns to *misericordia* in chapter 11 that mercy as it is for God, *secundum se*, is considered. It is this mercy which no longer resembles the human virtue. The inscrutability of this mercy is bound up with Anselm's treatment of justice in relation to God (*secundum se*), and so I will first treat the attribute of justice, which is at the centre of the ring.

#### CHAPTERS NINE & TEN: JUSTICE *SECUNDUM NOS* AND *SECUNDUM DEUM*

In chapter 9, Anselm formulates the problem of God's justice. How is it just to spare the wicked and to have mercy on them? His solution is that it is more just to spare the wicked: "It is just that you spare the wicked and make good men from bad." As in chapter 8, both the problem and the solution with respect to God are presented in terms which recall Seneca's advice for the prince in *De clementia*. There Seneca opposes pardon, which is unjust, to its equivalent meted out by the clemency of the wise man, whose justice and mercy both emanate from the good.<sup>41</sup>

Seneca articulates a similar paradox concerning justice: if "Pardon is the remission of deserved punishment" (*Venia est poenae merita remissio*) (*Clem.*, 2.7.1), then it seems the wise man will not pardon. However, as in the discussion of *clementia* and *misericordia*, Seneca preserves the benefits of pardon within the limits of justice.

Pardon is given to a man who ought to be punished (*Ei ignoscitur, qui puniri debuit*); but a wise man (*sapiens*) does nothing which he ought not to do, omits to do nothing which he ought to do; therefore he does not remit a punishment which he ought to exact. But in a more honourable way he will bestow upon you that which you wish to obtain by pardon (*ex venia*); for the wise man will show mercy, be considerate, and rectify; he will do the same that he would do if he pardoned, and yet he will not pardon, since he who pardons admits that he has omitted to do something which he ought to have done. (*Clem.*, 2.7.1–2)<sup>42</sup>

41. "The wise man, therefore, will not pity, but will succour, will benefit, and since he is born to be of help to all and to serve the common good, he will give to each his share thereof. He will extend a due measure of his goodness even to the unfortunates who deserve to be censured and disciplined" (*Clem.*, 2.6.3).

42. For Seneca, mercy is not other than justice, but is in fact compatible with the extreme of justice: "Mercy has the freedom in decision; it sentences not by the letter of the law, but in accordance with what is fair and good; it may acquit and it may assess the damages at any value it pleases. It does none of these things as if it were doing less than is just, but as if the justest thing were that which it has resolved upon" (*Clem.*, 2.7.3). Seneca's rationale for the practical

In chapter 10 the discussion of justice is problematised in a way that falls beyond the human concept of justice found in chapter 9. Within these two consecutive chapters on justice, Anselm moves from a notion of justice which demands that the wicked be spared, to a notion of justice which spares some of the wicked and punishes others, but the principle by which God discerns the difference is to us inscrutable. Thus the justice according to which He makes the distinction is different in kind from the justice in chapter 9 that is recognisable as the highest degree of the human concept of justice. This is God's justice in relation to himself, whereas chapter 9 is God's justice in relation to us. Mercy in chapter 11 is God's Mercy in relation to himself (*secundum se*) because it is that mercy which is derived from his justice in relation to himself (*secundum se*): *sic ergo nascitur de iustitia tua misericordia tua*. God is not, as in chapter 8, simply merciful in relation to us, but in a singular way in relation to himself.

#### CONCLUSION

By the time Anselm arrives at the end of chapter 13, even the attribute of incorporeality (apparently the least problematic attribute and one which belongs to any philosophical theology going back at least to Plato and up to Anselm's near contemporary Maimonides) has become mysterious and beyond our intellectual grasp. The retrospective in chapter 14 brings out the failure of these chapters to achieve the stated goal of the work, and introduces the crisis of chapter 15. Despite the promising beginning of chapters 6 to 9, Anselm has not found what he was seeking (chapter 14) and God turns out in chapter 15 to be that which is greater than can be thought.

The content of the ring structure is in this case one with the form: the attributes are for God both human and divine. God's *sensualitas*, *potentia*, *misericordia*, and *iustitia* are at once the maximum of the human attributes and also fully divine. Following as they do upon the demonstration in chapters 1–5 of the brute fact of God's existence, and preceding the spiritual crisis and adumbrated spiritual vision of 14–26, the place of the ring in the *Proslogion* suggests a possible trinitarian division. The Being of God is established in 1–5, and this unfolds in 6–13 into a kind of knowing of God, yet this knowing is at the same time beyond us (cf. the interplay between Romans 1:20 and 1 Corinthians 13:12 in Augustine, *De trinitate* book 15). I suggest that Chapters 14–26 could represent the completion of a trinitarian structure in

purpose of mercy recalls Anselm's reasoning: "The wise man will remit many punishments, he will save many whose character though unsound can yet be freed from unsoundness. He will be like the good husbandman who tends, not merely the trees that are straight and tall, but also applies props to those that for some reason have grown crooked in order that they may be straightened" (*Clem.*, 2.7.4).



the *Proslogion*. The singular character of God's *spiritus* in chapter 13 is dwelt upon and developed in these chapters. After the crisis of 15, chapter 16 returns to God's omnipresence (*ubique es tota praesens*), as does 18 (*ubique totus es*), while chapter 17 contains a reflection on the spiritual senses. Chapter 19 makes clear that God is not in fact in a place, but rather contains all things (*tu continens omnia*), which leads to the conclusion in chapter 20 that he is beyond eternal things. Though he lacks any spatial extension (*es sine omni spatio*), "All things are filled with" God (chapter 21). God is, *simpliciter* (chapter 22), and therefore he is paradoxically triune (chapter 23). Chapters 24 and 25 describe at great length how great a good man will enjoy with the whole understanding (*totum intellectum*). The little man (*homuncio*), exhorted in the first line of chapter 1, is once again exhorted to contemplate the comparison of present and future joys. In fine, the final chapter of the *Proslogion* (26) is the culmination not only of the soul's progress in the work as a whole, but also of this reflection on *spiritus* which proceeded from chapter 13. The willing and loving described in the final chapter are no longer merely promised, but that which Anselm has discovered.

