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## Saint Anselm. Elements of a Theory of Knowledge

### Santo Anselmo. Elementos de uma Teoria do Conhecimento

#### Resumo

A teoria do conhecimento é normalmente um factor condicionante da atitude dos filósofos face ao empreendimento especulativo das provas da existência de Deus. Isso é claro no caso de São Tomás de Aquino, que rejeitou a prova anselmiana, por negar um conhecimento intelectual directo da essência divina pelo ser humano. Santo Anselmo, porém, nunca afirmou tal conhecimento, e também não teorizou expressamente o processo do conhecimento humano. Há, no entanto, elementos dispersos de uma teoria implícita do conhecimento nos seus escritos. O propósito que anima este estudo é fazer o levantamento desses elementos de modo a traçar as linhas gerais da teoria do conhecimento, que é fundamentalmente solidária quer com as quatro vias do *Monologion*, quer, em especial, com o seu argumento único do *Proslogion*.

**Palavras-chave:** Filosofia; Conhecimento; Pensamento; Santo Anselmo; Argumento de Anselmo.

#### Abstract

The theory of knowledge is normally a conditioning factor in philosophers' attitudes concerning the speculative enterprise undertaken in the proofs of God's existence. This much is clear in the case of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who rejected Anselm's proof because he denied the human being's direct intellectual knowledge of the divine essence. Saint Anselm, however, never stated such a knowledge, nor did he expressly theorize the process of human cognition. Notwithstanding, there are dispersed elements of an implicit theory of knowledge in his writings, emerging ever since the *Monologion*. The aim of this study is to survey those elements so as to outline the general vectors of a theory of knowledge, which is fundamentally solidary not only with the four ways in the *Monologion*, but also and especially with the sole argument in the *Proslogion*.

**Keywords:** Philosophy; Knowledge; Thought; Saint Anselm; Anselm's Argument.

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## 1. A reason of method: *sola ratione*

At the very Prologue of the *Monologion*, Anselm characterizes the method of meditation he himself had produced at the request of some Benedictine confreres as follows: to suspend the authority of the Scriptures and conclude each investigation in accessible fashion, through current arguments and simple dispute, the necessity of reason (*rationis necessitas*) persuading swiftly, and the clarity of truth (*veritatis claritas*) showing with evidence<sup>1</sup>. According to Anselm's meditation in the *Monologion*, the suspension of the authority of the Scriptures is compensated by that of the Church Fathers, and especially by the authority of Saint Augustine, in his work *De Trinitate*<sup>2</sup>. Apart from this, validity falls upon a reason that brings necessity and a truth that brings clarity. What reason and truth are these? Such is the question that commands our research.

Still in the Prologue of the *Monologion*, Anselm characterizes his method by the personal autonomy of thought (*sola cogitatione*), in dispute with himself and in process of discovering that which he had hitherto not heeded<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the title *Monologion* is a neologism which does justice to this methodological presentation of the work, as a monologue of personal thought in an internal process of debate and cognitive acquisition. It is in Chapter I, however, that Anselm declares the possibility of approaching solely through reason (*sola ratione*) all the matters of faith in the *Monologion*. It is the expression *sola ratione* that coins, as rational, Anselm's method of meditation in the *Monologion*<sup>4</sup>. It is also this expression,

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1 "Cuius scilicet scribendae meditationis magis secundum suam voluntatem quam secundum rei facilitatem aut meam possibilitatem hanc mihi formam praestituerunt: quatenus auctoritate scripturae penitus nihil in ea persuaderetur, sed quidquid per singulas investigationes finis assereret, id ita esse plano stilo et vulgaribus argumentis simplici disputatione et rationis necessitas breviter cogeret et veritatis claritas patenter ostenderet." S. Anselm, *Monologion (Mon)*, Prologus, ed. F. S. Schmitt (S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia, t. I) Friedrich Fromman Verlag, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1968, I, p. 7, 5-11.

2 See *Mon*, Prologus, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 8, 8-14.

3 "Quaecumque autem ibi dixi, sub persona secum sola cogitatione disputandis et investigantis ea quae prius non advertisset, prolata sunt" *Mon*, Prologus, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 8, 18-20.

4 "Si quis unam naturam, summam omnium quae sunt, solam sibi in aeterna sua beatitudine sufficientem, omnibusque rebus aliis hoc ipsum quod aliquid sunt aut quod aliquomodo bene sunt, per omnipotentem bonitatem suam dantem et facientem, aliaque perplura quae de deo sive de eius creatura necessarie credimus, aut non audiendo aut non credendo ignorat: puto quia ea ipsa ex magna parte, si vel mediocris ingenii est, potest ipse sibi saltem sola ratione persuadere." *Mon* I, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 13, 5-11.

*sola ratione*, that gives rise to the commonplace statement of autonomy, and even audacity, of Anselm's reason. And, precisely because of this autonomy, we tend to all too easily misapprehend Anselm as one who crosses the line of the arrogance of reason, without having sufficiently pondered on the meaning of this autonomy.

In truth, Anselm's expression *sola ratione* does not mean a boastful reason, one that is illusorily convinced of its immense reach. Instead, it means a solitary reason, one reduced to its own resources, experimenting them against that which defies human comprehension, as is the case with the contents of religious faith. Hence, this solitary reason is plural; that is: multiple are the manners of experimenting rational resources with regard to challenging matters, and among these Anselm proposes one, to be easily understood by any person<sup>5</sup>. Also, this solitary reason is plural and communicable. Furthermore, this solitary reason, plural in its ways and communicable, is also tentative and provisional, that is, it does not contain an absolute necessity, even if it concludes with necessity<sup>6</sup>. These properties – solitary, plural, communicable, tentative, and provisional – are ascribed to reason by the thinking subject, and thus accuse their relativity. And yet, these properties are no natural or original attributes of the thinking being's rational faculty; instead, they are properties of the use of this rational faculty; they are properties of a reason in use, or in course.

Whenever a philosophical question arises, this reason is activated to conduct thought in the analysis and resolution of said question. We can therefore deem it a methodical reason of philosophy. For instance, when the mind wakes and inquires on the provenance of all the good things that we wish and judge as such, the philosophical question of the origin of all goods emerges. Here, then, intervenes the reason that conducts (*ratione ducente*) us from irrational ignorance to a rational approximation to the purpose, which is to know the origin of all goods<sup>7</sup>. This is, as such, a reason that guides us in the process leading to the resolution of the great philosophical questions, even if it attains no more than a progress or an approxi-

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<sup>5</sup> “Quod cum multis modis facere possit, unum ponam, quem illi aestimo esse promptissimum.” *Mon* 1, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 13, 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> “In quo tamen, si quid dixerit quod maior non monstret auctoritas: sic volo accipi ut, quamvis ex rationibus quae mihi videntur, quasi necessarium concludatur, non ob hoc tamen omnino necessarium, sed tantum sic interim videri posse dicatur.” *Mon* 1, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 14, 1-4.

<sup>7</sup> “Etenim cum omnes frui solis iis appetant quae bona putant: in promptu est, ut aliquando mentis oculum convertat ad investigandum illud, unde sunt bona ea ipsa, quae non appetit nisi quia iudicat esse bona, ut deinde ratione ducente et illo prosequente ad ea quae irrationabiliter ignorat, rationabiliter proficiat.” *Mon* 1, ed. Schmitt: I, p. 13, 12-16; p. 14, 1.

mation to the resolution of the question. It is therefore a processual, progressive reason, in approximation to the envisaged object. This is the conductive, the guiding, or methodical reason of philosophy in Saint Anselm.

Throughout Anselm's discourse there are several allusions to this conductive or methodical reason of philosophy. In the 4<sup>th</sup> way of the *Monologion*, such is the reason that persuades (*persuadet ratio*) us of the existence of a supereminent and insurmountable nature in the order of things<sup>8</sup>; such is the reason that deduces (*ratio deducitur*) the infinitude of the order of things, as an absurd consequence of the hypothesis regarding the infinite degrees of perfection between natures<sup>9</sup>; and this reason had already taught (*ratio docuerit*) us that that which exists for itself and for which all things exist is the supreme existent<sup>10</sup>. In the scope of the philosophy of creation, it is reason that teaches (*ratione docente*) us how to identify the creative speech and the supreme essence itself<sup>11</sup>. At the beginning of the theology of the attributes of supreme essence, Anselm expresses a certain skepticism about the possibility of saying something that befits the creating substance, but this does not prevent him from attempting to follow the inquiry that reason is to conduct (*ratio perducet*)<sup>12</sup>. And reason establishes the rule for selecting the divine attributes (*sicut ratio docet*): the supreme essence cannot be ascribed anything that is surmountable in dignity, rather is to be ascribed all that in this manner is insurmountable<sup>13</sup>.

"In the light of reason" (*rationis luce*) is an expression that Anselm employs to express the reason that conducts his theological reflection. This light of reason

<sup>8</sup> "Cum igitur naturarum aliae aliis negari non possint meliores, nihilominus persuadet ratio aliquam in eis sic supereminere, ut nec habeat se superiorem." *Mon* 4, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 17, 3-5.

<sup>9</sup> "Si enim huiusmodi graduum distinctio sic est infinita, ut nullus ibi sit gradus superior quo superior alius non inveniatur, ad hoc ratio deducitur, ut ipsarum multitudo naturarum nullo fine claudatur. Hoc autem nemo non putat absurdum, nisi qui nimis est absurdus." *Mon* 4, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 17, 5-8.

<sup>10</sup> "Nam cum paulo ante ratio docuerit id quod per se est et per quod alia cuncta sunt, esse summum omnium existentium: aut e converso id quod est summum, est per se et cuncta alia per illud, aut erunt plura summa." *Mon* 4, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 17, 29-32.

<sup>11</sup> See *Mon* 12, ed. Schmitt, I, p.26. And if nothing else existed, reason coerces (*ratio tamen cogat*) to identify the supreme spirit with its own word: see *Mon* 33, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 1-4.

<sup>12</sup> "Quamquam enim mirer, si possit in nominibus vel verbis quae aptamus rebus factis de nihilo reperiri, quod digne dicatur de creatrice universorum substantia: tentandum tamen est, ad quid hanc indagationem ratio perducet." *Mon* 15, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 28, 5-8.

<sup>13</sup> "Penitus enim ipsa summa essentia tacenda est esse aliquid eorum quibus est aliquid, quod non est, quod ipsa sunt superius; et est omnino, sicut ratio docet, dicenda quodlibet eorum, quibus est omne quod non est quod ipsa sunt, inferius." *Mon* 15, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 29, 26-29.

condones with a previous and summary comprehension of contents – for instance: the supreme substance cannot be made from matter, nor can it come from nothingness – which does not inhibit the demand for demonstration or a confirmation by proof (*probatio*)<sup>14</sup>. Anselm also deems “reason” the very reasoning of proof; for instance, when he states that “in view of a reason all in all similar (*simili per omnia ratione*)” to that through which we deduced that all existents exist due to something unique, which exists for itself (the third way of the *Monologion*), one can also deduce that all who persist are not conserved but due to something which persists for itself<sup>15</sup>.

To schematize what was said, we can discern two moments in Anselm’s method of the *sola ratione*: a first moment of comprehension in synthesis at the light of reason; and a second moment of confirmation by demonstration, which constitutes an analysis of the implicit implications in the comprehension in synthesis. These two moments are not successive in time; they are concomitant, in such a way that the second one, the proof, is but an exploratory and argumentative development of the first one, including the consideration and resolution of possible objections. This is the reason why the exercise of proof is no mere frivolous and superfluous supplement in relation to the summary comprehension; rather it is a complement intrinsically required by that very comprehension. It is as if reason needed the time to reason and to discourse so as to process its own comprehension of things. Thus proceeds Anselm’s reason.

However, the reason of Anselm’s method does not lead to full intellectual satisfaction, as is illustrated by the discomfort caused by the complicated interdependence between the arguments of the *Monologion*, which set the author in search for a sole, self-sufficient argument in its probatory force, as is declared at the very beginning of the *Proslogion*. But already in the *Monologion*, the exercise of method culminates with the rational comprehension of an impenetrable

<sup>14</sup> “Quid igitur? Quod enim non est, a quo faciente aut ex qua materia aut quibus adiumentis ad esse pervenerit: id videtur aut esse nihil, aut si aliquid est, per nihil esse et ex nihilo. Quae licet ex iis, quae rationis luce de summa iam animadverti substantia, putem nullatenus in illam posse cadere, non tamen negligam huius rei probationem contexere.” *Mon* 6, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 19, 10-14.

<sup>15</sup> “Simile namque per omnia ratione qua collectum est omnia quae sunt esse per unum aliquid, unde ipsum solum est per seipsum et alia per aliud, simili inquam ratione potest probari quia quaecumque vigent per unum aliquid vigent, unde illud solum viget per seipsum et alia per aliud.” *Mon* 13, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 27, 7-11. On the reasoning that constitutes the third way in *Monologion* 3, which we have designated as “way of existence”, see M. L. Xavier, *A Questão da Existência de Deus. Uma Disputa Medieval*, Zéfiro, Sintra 2013, pp. 21-23.

incomprehensibility. How is this horizon of incomprehensibility to be considered rationally? By specifying the limits of the acquired comprehension, as does the author of the *Monologion* upon taking stock of the question. The exercise of the *sola ratione* method enabled Anselm to conclude that there is a supreme wisdom which knows all that it made (Creation) and knows and says itself (the Word of the Trinity), but how does it know, and how does it know itself: this can only be understood by entering divine wisdom, which is completely out of reach for human comprehension. In Anselm's words: «What is there so incomprehensible, so ineffable, as that which is above all things?»<sup>16</sup>.

As it is compatible with the objective discernment of limits and with a horizon of incomprehensibility, the reason of method does not exclude faith. Nor does faith exclude reason. By interpreting the difference between a living faith and a dead faith (Jam. 2, 20; 2, 26; Gal. 5, 6), Anselm states that the living one is to believe in that in which one is to believe (*in id in quod credi debet*), and the dead one is just to believe that which one is to believe (*id quod credi debet*)<sup>17</sup>. Dead faith is the objective, doctrinal faith. Living faith is the faith in movement which tends towards the object of faith. Precisely this movement is indicated by the double “in” of Anselm's formula. Now, of this movement, which the biblical texts identify with action and love, cannot be excluded reason, without which action and love would be devoid of discernment. Hence, Anselm resumes his tentative movement, initiated in the *Monologion*, in his next work, the *Proslogion*, a title which means quite literally a tendency for discourse or an attempt to discourse (*alloquium*, that is, *ad-loquium*), and which originally read *Fides quaerens intellectum*<sup>18</sup>, that is, faith in search for intelligence, thereby expressing the movement of living faith in Anselm.

<sup>16</sup> “Quid autem tam incomprehensibile, tam ineffabile, quam id quod super omnia est? Quapropter si ea quae de summa essentia hactenus disputata sunt, necessariis sunt rationibus asserta: quamvis sic intellectu penetrari non possint, ut et verbis valeant explicari, nullatenus tamen certitudinis eorum nutat soliditas. Nam si superior consideratio rationabiliter comprehendit incomprehensibile esse, quomodo eadem summa sapientia sciat ea quae fecit, de quibus tam multa nos scire necesse est: quis explicet quomodo sciat aut dicat seipsam, de qua aut nihil aut vix aliquid ab homine scire possibile est?” *Mon* 64, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 75, 6-14.

<sup>17</sup> “Satis itaque convenienter dici potest viva fides credere in id in quod credi debet, mortua vero fides credere tantum id quod credi debet.” *Mon* 78, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 85, 7-9.

<sup>18</sup> See *Proslogion* (*Pros*), Prooemium, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 94. “Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam, sed credo ut intelligam.” *Pros* 1, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 100, 18.

## 2. A cognitive reason of the mind: *intellectus*

While he did not write a work specializing in the theory of knowledge, Saint Anselm dedicated a work to truth: *De Veritate*. In this work, the author offers us a definition of truth common to all the cases of that which may be true, be this a proposition, a thought, a perception or an action. The definition is as follows: “truth is the rectitude perceptible only by the mind” (*rectitudo mente sola perceptibilis*)<sup>19</sup>; that is, truth is the purely intelligible rectitude. This definition indicates the property that distinguishes truth as a sub-genus of rectitude: pure intelligibility. Pure, in order to distinguish intelligible rectitude, which is truth, from the at once sensible and intelligible rectitude, which is the geometrical rectitude of the rod, or any other straight line<sup>20</sup>. Pure intelligibility is therefore the distinctive trait of truth in any case. With good reason, Saint Thomas Aquinas would later acknowledge, in the first of his *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, that Saint Anselm’s definition constitutes a perspective on truth from the point of view of the subject of knowledge<sup>21</sup>.

Let us then approach the subject of knowledge. Here we find the senses of the body and the reason of mind, which is the intellect.

What is the role of the senses in human knowledge? Anselm does not share the ancient skeptical doubt on the senses. On the contrary, he is implicitly in line with Augustine<sup>22</sup> in defending the cognitive value of the senses, situating the origin of errors above the senses, at the level of judgment. The senses do not deceive. The error takes place in the interpretation of the data reported by the external senses, that is, in the opinion (*opinio*) at the level of the inner sense

<sup>19</sup> “M. Possumus igitur, nisi fallor, definire quia veritas est rectitudo mente sola perceptibilis.” *De Veritate* (DV) 11, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 191, 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> “D. [...]. Nempe nec plus nec minus continet ista definitio veritatis quam expediat, quoniam nomen rectitudinis dividit eam ab omni re quae rectitudo non vocatur; quod vero sola mente percipi dicitur, separat eam a rectitudine visibili.” DV 11, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 191, 21-24.

<sup>21</sup> “Alio modo diffinitur secundum id in quo formaliter ratio veri perficitur, et sic dicit Ysaac quod ‘Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus’, et Anselmus in libro De veritate ‘Veritas est rectitudo sola mente perceptibilis’, – rectitudo enim ista secundum adaequationem quandam dicitur – ; et Philosophus dicit IV Metaphysicae quod diffinientes verum dicimus ‘cum dicitur esse quod est aut non esse quod non est.’” S. Tomás de Aquino, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q.1, a.1 (Thomae Aquinatis Opera Omnia Iussu Leonis XIII P. M. Edita. T. 22, vol. I, fasc. 2) Roma 1970, p. 6, 194-193.

<sup>22</sup> See S. Augustine, *Contra Academicos* III, 11, 24-26.

(*sensus interior*)<sup>23</sup> and the judgment of the soul (*iudicium animae*)<sup>24</sup>. The senses only report what they can and how they can, that is, according to the way they are affected.

But what is it to feel? To feel, according to Anselm, is to experiment (*experiri*) through the senses the good things of the external world<sup>25</sup>. However, this feeling of experience undertaken with regard to the goods of the world is more than just sensible perception, since it implies a valuing judgment of the object of experience, as good. Experience is also valued as a universal and solid basis for knowledge. For instance, everyone assumes as an incontrovertible and inescapable experience (*experimentum*) that that of which something is made is the cause for that thing, and that every cause somehow contributes to the essence of the effect<sup>26</sup>. Hence, experience is an intersubjective basis for knowledge constituted beforehand by judicative activity and a knowledge of causality, insofar as it includes the knowledge of a material cause and a cause-effect relation. Anselm thus situates at the level of experience objects which Aristotle placed above experience, at the level of knowledge, as is the case with the consideration of causes<sup>27</sup>.

Anselm, however, ascribes the act of feeling other meanings apart from those of the senses and experience. To feel (*sentire*) is also to discern by the reason of the mind (*ratione mentis*) the diversity of what is real, especially the diversity of the natures of things<sup>28</sup>. Precisely this entails judging through the intellect (*omnis*

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<sup>23</sup> “D. Est quidem in sensibus corporis veritas, sed non semper. Nam fallunt nos aliquando. Nam cum video aliquando per medium vitrum aliquid, fallit me visus, quia aliquando renuntiat mihi corpus, quod video ultra vitrum, eiusdem esse coloris cuius est et vitrum, cum alterius sit coloris; aliquando vero facit me putare vitrum habere colorem rei quam ultra video, cum non habeat. Multa sunt alia, in quibus visus et alii sensus fallunt. - M. Non mihi videtur haec veritas vel falsitas in sensibus esse, sed in opinione. Ipse namque sensus interior se fallit, non illi mentitur exterior.” *DV* 6, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 183, 15-23.

<sup>24</sup> “Similiter cum fustis integer, cuius pars est intra aquam et pars extra, putatur fractus; aut cum putamus quod visus noster vultus nostros inveniat in speculo; et cum multa alia nobis aliter videntur visus et alii sensus nuntiare quam sint: non culpa sensuum est qui renuntiant quod posunt, quoniam ita posse acceperunt, sed iudicio animae imputandum est, quod non bene discernit quid illi possint aut quid debeant.” *DV* 6, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 184, 26-31.

<sup>25</sup> “Cum tam innumerabilia bona sint, quorum tam multam diversitatem et sensibus corporeis experimur et ratione mentis discernimus” *Mon* 1, ed. Schmitt: I, p. 14, 5-7.

<sup>26</sup> “Nam ex quocumque fit aliquid, id causa est eius quod ex se fit, et omnis causa necesse est aliquid ad essentiam effecti praebeat adiumentum. Quod sic omnes tenent experimento, ut et nulli rapiatur contendendo, et vix ulli surripiatur decipiendo.” *Mon* 8, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 22, 13-16.

<sup>27</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* A, 981a 25-30.

<sup>28</sup> See *Mon* 1 (Schmitt: I, p. 14, 5-7); “Si quis intendat rerum naturas, velit nolit sentit non eas

*intellectus iudicat*) on the relation of the qualitative order of natures<sup>29</sup>. As such, the act of feeling is also ascribed to the intellect (*intellectus sentire*), as in the case, for instance, of perceiving intellectually, by force of reason, that the divine attributes are not separable from the supreme nature<sup>30</sup>. Hence, to feel, at the level of the intellect, comports judicative activity and perhaps some form of intellectual intuition.

To sum up, to feel is to perceive through the senses, through experience and through the intellect, which is the reason of the mind. In this manner, one obtains a broad meaning of feeling (*sentire*), namely, to know by way of any of the cognitive forces in presence. To feel is the same as to know, it is the proper cognitive function of the senses and the intellect. Hence, to be sensible is a greater perfection, not to be reduced to the passive property of being perceptible by the senses, rather entailing all the sensible and intellective activity of the cognizing subject. In this broad and active meaning, sensible even satisfies the rule of selection of divine attributes – it is better to be sensible than not to be, for it is better to know than not to know – and thus one may say that God is supremely sensible, as is expounded in the *Proslogion*<sup>31</sup>. God is sensible because it is cognoscitive, it is the cognoscitive subject which knows all without exception.

At times Anselm also considers reason in God, for God is rational<sup>32</sup>, but he does not usually refer to divine reason as being an intellect.

*Intellectus* bears several meanings in Anselm's discourse, as was the case with *sentire*.

There is, first and foremost, a hermeneutical use of the term *intellectus* in

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omnes contineri una dignitatis paritate, sed quasdam earum distingui graduum imparitate." *Mon* 4, ed. Schmitt, I, p.16, 31-32; p. 17, 1.

<sup>29</sup> "Hinc etenim fortasse, immo non fortasse sed pro certo, hinc omnis intellectus iudicat naturas quolibet modo viventes praestare non viventibus, sentientes non sentientibus, rationales irrationalibus." *Mon* 31, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 49, 12-14.

<sup>30</sup> "Quoniam igitur summa natura non proprie dicitur quod quia habet iustitiam, sed existit iustitia: cum dicitur iusta, proprie intelligitur existens iustitia, non autem habens iustitiam. [...] - Quod vero in exemplo iustitiae ratum esse conspicitur, hoc de omnibus quae similiter de ipsa summa natura dicuntur, intellectus sentire per rationem constringitur." *Mon* 16, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 30, 22-24, 32-33; p. 31, 1.

<sup>31</sup> "Sed si sentire non nisi cognoscere aut non nisi ad cognoscendum est - qui enim sentit cognoscit secundum sensuum proprietatem, ut per visum colores, per gustum sapes - : non inconvenienter dicitur aliquo modo sentire, quidquid aliquo modo cognoscit. Ergo domine, quamvis non sis corpus, vere tamen eo modo summe sensibilis es, quo summe omnia cognoscis, non quo animal corporeo sensu cognoscit." *Pros* 6, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 105, 1-6.

<sup>32</sup> "Voluntas namque dei numquam est irrationalis." *Cur Deus Homo* I, 8, ed. Schmitt, II, p. 59, 11.

Anselm's philosophical vocabulary. The significance (*sententia*) of a proposition (*pronuntiatio*) is subdivided into meaning (*sensus*), which may be true or false; and in meaning understood (*intellectus*), which is the true one. One single sentence may bear two meanings, one false and the other one true (*intellectus*): for instance, the proposition "nothing exists before or after the supreme essence" has a false meaning, if the term "nothing" signifies the same as referring to something, and a true meaning, if "nothing" signifies the negation that something exists<sup>33</sup>. And an expression such as "to exist in space and time" may have two true meanings (*intellectus*), namely, with regard to the supreme essence, insofar as it is present in space and time, and spatial-temporal things, insofar as they are delimited by space and by time<sup>34</sup>. Even the insipient in Anselm's argument understands the meaning (*intelligit*) of what is said – "something greater than which nothing can be thought" – although he does not understand that this exists<sup>35</sup>, for he does not understand it sufficiently to draw that consequence.

Yet, the discourse could not have a meaning true and understood (*intellectus*) if the *intellectus* was not considered in the scope of Anselm's anthropology. Man is said to be body, rational and man, but not in the same manner: body and rational are so according to distinct aspects; man, through totality or as a whole<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, there is in man a rational mind (*mens rationalis*), whose substance, quality and greatness the senses do not apprehend, and which Anselm situates above the cor-

<sup>33</sup> "Duplicem namque pronuntiatio gerit sententiam, cum dicitur quia nihil fuit ante summam essentiam. Unus enim est eius sensus: quia priusquam summa essentia esset fuit, cum erat nihil; alter vero eius est intellectus: quia ante summam essentiam non fuit aliquid. [...]. Quare cum dicitur quia nihil fuit ante illam, secundum posteriorem intellectum accipiendum est; nec sic est exponendum ut intelligatur aliquando fuisse, quando illa non erat et nihil erat, sed ita ut intelligatur quia ante illam non fuit aliquid. Eadem ratio est duplicis intellectus, si nihil dicatur post illam esse futurum." *Mon* 19, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 34, 18-22, 28-32.

<sup>34</sup> "Nam si ipsa summa essentia dicitur esse in loco aut tempore: quamvis de illa et de localibus sive temporalibus naturis una sit prolatio propter loquendi consuetudinem, diversus tamen est intellectus propter rerum dissimilitudinem. In illis namque duo quaedam eadem prolatio significat, id est: quia et praesentia sunt locis et temporibus in quibus esse dicuntur, et quia continentur ab ipsis; in summa vero essentia unum tantum percipitur, id est: quia praesens est, non etiam quia continetur." *Mon* 22, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 40, 26-33. See also *Mon* 65, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 76, 1-9.

<sup>35</sup> "Sed certe ipse idem insipiens, cum audit hoc ipsum quod dico: 'aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest', intelligit quod audit; et quod intelligit in intellectu eius est, etiam si non intelligat illud esse." *Pros* 2, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 101, 7-9.

<sup>36</sup> "Cum enim aliquis homo dicatur et corpus et rationalis et homo, non uno modo vel consideratione haec tria dicitur. Secundum aliud enim est corpus, et secundum aliud rationalis, et singulum horum non est totum hoc quod est homo." *Mon* 17, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 31, 27-30.

poreal senses in the order of natures<sup>37</sup>. And in place of rationality, a place which does not circumscribe reason, as if this were a physical place, there is an intellect: such is the reason of the mind, or the intellect that exists in the soul<sup>38</sup>.

Which are the competences of this intellect, the human intellect? Although Anselm does not expound a doctrine in this regard, we would dare say that they are fundamentally two: to judge and to intuit, at least to a certain extent.

To judge is a theoretical-practical competence of the intellect. According to Anselm, to be rational is nothing but to discern the just from the unjust, the true from the untrue, the good from the evil, the greater good from the lesser good, so as to consequentially take the stand of adhering or reproaching, that is, of judging<sup>39</sup>. In this way, to judge supposes the differentiation of the opposites and the distinction of degrees in each of them, which may be considered a theoretical discernment. But such a discernment would be idle, were it not meant to take a stand regarding the discerned data. Indeed, this stand is demanded by reason (*prout ratio exigit*)<sup>40</sup> – surely not a strictly theoretical reason, but a theoretical-practical one, as is the reason of Anselm’s philosophy, insofar as its aim is to transpose the order of knowledge into will<sup>41</sup>.

Indeed, the human mind would not be able to discern the natural diversity of things, namely, to distinguish itself from irrational creatures, and to distinguish supreme wisdom from all creatures, had it not a memory and an intelligence of

37 “Mens enim rationalis, quae nullo corporeo sensu quid vel qualis vel quanta sit percipitur: quanto minor esset, si esset aliquid eorum quae corporeis sensibus subiacent, tanto maior est quam quodlibet eorum.” *Mon* 15, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 29, 23-26.

38 “Solemus namque saepe localia verba irreprehensibiliter attribueri rebus, quae nec loca sunt nec circumscriptione locali continentur. Velut si dicam ibi esse intellectum in anima, ubi est rationalitas. Nam cum ‘ibi’ et ‘ubi’ localia verba sint, non tamen locali circumscriptione aut anima continentur aliquid, aut intellectus vel rationalitas continentur.” *Mon* 23, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 41, 26-29; p. 42, 1-2.

39 “Denique rationali naturae non est aliud esse rationalem, quam posse discernere iustum a non iusto, verum a non vero, bonum a non bono, magis bonum a minus bono. Hoc autem posse omnino inutile illi est et supervacuum, nisi quod discernit amet aut reprobet secundum verae discretionis iudicium.” *Mon* 68, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 78, 21-25.

40 “Otiosa namque et penitus inutilis est memoria et intelligentia cuiuslibet rei, nisi prout ratio exigit res ipsa ametur aut reprobetur.” *Mon* 49, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 64, 21-23.

41 “Etenim praeter hoc quia creanti se debet hoc ipsum quod est: hinc quoque quia nil tam praecipuum posse quam reminisci et intelligere et amare summum bonum cognoscitur, nimirum nihil tam praecipue debere velle convincitur. Quis enim neget quaecumque meliora sunt in potestate, ea magis esse debere in voluntate? [...] Hinc itaque satis patenter videtur omne rationale ad hoc existere, ut sicut ratione discretionis aliquid magis vel minus bonum sive non bonum iudicat, ita magis vel minus id amet aut respuat.” *Mon* 68, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 78, 16-20, 25-26; p. 79, 1.

itself, as well as a memory and an intelligence of the supreme wisdom<sup>42</sup>. The rational mind possesses a natural memory, intelligence and love towards that which is better and greater than all things, and no gift of nature is more relevant than this orientation of the forces of the mind<sup>43</sup>. This way, the human mind is naturally inclined towards what is better, and promptly so by the powers of knowledge.

But what does this mean, a natural intelligence of that which is greater and better than anything else? An intellectual intuition?

Anselm sometimes uses the verb *intueri* to designate a more than sensible gaze, one that captures intelligible contents, such as: man's own reality, be it through the image of the body or through reason<sup>44</sup>; or the difference between human production and divine creation<sup>45</sup>; or even the distinctive properties and the communion of the divine persons of the Trinity<sup>46</sup>. However, some contents defy the human intellect's ability to see, such as: to perceive how unique the divine Word of the Trinity<sup>47</sup> is, a point whose altitude already transcends the tip of the human intellect (*acies intellectus humani*), even with the support of the reason of method<sup>48</sup>; or to understand why divine

<sup>42</sup> "At quomodo vel cogitari potest quod summa sapientia se aliquando non intelligat, cum rationalis mens possit non solum suimet sed et ipsius summae sapientiae reminisci, et illam et se intelligere? Si enim mens humana nullam eius aut suam memoriam aut intelligentiam posset, nequaquam se ab irrationabilibus creaturis et illam ab omni creatura, secum sola tacite disputando, sicut nunc mens mea facit, discerneret." *Mon* 32, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 51, 7-12.

<sup>43</sup> "Omnino autem cogitari non potest rationali creaturae naturaliter esse datum aliquid tam praecipuum tamque simile summae sapientiae, quam hoc quia potest reminisci et intelligere et amare id, quod optimum et maximum est omnium." *Mon* 67, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 78, 7-10.

<sup>44</sup> "Aliter namque dico hominem, cum eum hoc nomine, quod est 'homo', significo; aliter, cum idem nomen tacens cogito; aliter, cum eum ipsum hominem mens aut per corporis imaginem aut per rationem intuetur." *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 25, 4-7.

<sup>45</sup> "Sed quamvis summam substantiam constet prius in se quasi dixisse cunctam creaturam, quam eam secundum eandem et per eandem suam intimam locutionem conderet, quemadmodum faber prius mente concipit quod postea secundum mentis conceptionem opere perficit: multam tamen in hac similitudine intueor dissimilitudinem." *Mon* 11, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 26, 3-7.

<sup>46</sup> "Sed ecce, dum huius patris filiique proprietates communionemque delectabiliter intueor, nihil delectabilius in illis contemplandum invenio quam mutui amoris affectum." *Mon* 49, ed. Schmitt: I, p. 64, 16-18.

<sup>47</sup> See *Mon* 63, ed. Schmitt, I, pp. 73-74.

<sup>48</sup> "Videtur mihi huius tam sublimis rei secretum transcendere omnem intellectus aciem humani, et idcirco conatum explicandi qualiter hoc sit continendum puto. Sufficit namque debere existimo rem incomprehensibilem indaganti, si ad hoc ratiocinando pervenerit ut eam certissime esse cognoscat, etiamsi penetrare nequeat intellectu quomodo ita sit; nec idcirco minus iis adhiben-

kindness is merciful with the wicked, without thereby harming or refuting the reason of justice<sup>49</sup>.

The very argument of the *Proslogion* is, in Anselm's view, an experience of the limits of human intellect and thought.

In the Preamble to the *Proslogion*, Anselm gives an account of the thought experiment that led to the discovery of his sole argument, in a description we could today deem as phenomenological. In fact, he reports the thought experiment he lived as a persistent, almost obsessive, reiterately frustrated search – a search also repressed by the will to attend more consequent matters – until one day, amidst the conflict of his thoughts (*in ipso cogitationum conflictu*), he was presented (*se obtulit*) with that which he had so longed, as well as repelled to think<sup>50</sup>. Without using the verb *intueri*, Anselm describes the discovery of his argument not as the result of a methodical search, but as a sudden find amid the chaotic environment of his thoughts. An intellectual intuition? Of what, more precisely?

Upon establishing the natural orientation of the mind towards what is better, Anselm assumes, in the initial chapter of the *Proslogion*, that he was made to see his God, but he was yet to realize this purpose<sup>51</sup>. But Anselm also acknowledges that the realization of this purpose cannot but be conditioned by the ability of his

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dam fidei certitudinem, quae probationibus necessariis nulla alia repugnante ratione asseruntur, si suae naturalis altitudinis incomprehensibilitate explicari non patiantur.” *Mon* 64, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 74, 30-31; p. 75, 1-6.

49 “O altitudo bonitatis tuae, deus! et videtur unde sis misericors, et non pervidetur. Cernitur unde flumen manat, et non fons unde nascatur. Nam et de plenitudine bonitatis est quia peccatoribus tuis pius es, et in altitudine bonitatis latet qua ratione hoc es. Etenim licet bonis bona et malis mala ex bonitate retribuas, ratio tamen iustitiae hoc postulare videtur. Cum vero malis bona tribuis: et scitur quia summe bonus hoc facere voluit, et mirum est cur summe iustus hoc velle potuit.” *Pros* 9, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 107, 14-21; “Nam etsi difficile sit intelligere, quomodo misericordia tua non absit a tua iustitia, necessarium tamen est credere, quia nequaquam adversatur iustitiae quod exundat ex bonitate, quia nulla est sine iustitia, immo vere concordat iustitiae.” *Pros* 9, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 108, 2-5.

50 “Ad quod cum saepe studioseque cogitationem converterem, atque aliquando mihi videretur iam posse capi quod quaerebam, aliquando mentis aciem omnino fugeret: tandem desperans volui cessare velut ab inquisitione rei quam inveniri esset impossibile. Sed cum illam cogitationem, ne mentem meam frustra occupando ab aliis in quibus proficere possem impediret, penitus a me vellem excludere: tunc magis ac magis nolenti et defendenti se coepit cum importunitate quadam ingerere. Cum igitur quadam die vehementer eius importunitati resistendo fatigerer, in ipso cogitationum conflictu sic se obtulit quod desperaveram, ut studiose cogitationem ampecterer, quam sollicitus repellebam.” *Pros*, Prooemium, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 12-15.

51 “Denique ad te videndum factus sum, et nondum feci propter quod factus sum.” *Pros* 1, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 98, 14-15.

human intellect, in light of which he moderates his design towards intelligizing to a certain extent, that is, to a certain degree, the truth of his God (*desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam*)<sup>52</sup>. Upon subsequently taking stock of the sole argument and the following theology of attributes, the interrogative and emotional discourse of Chapter XIV confirms the moderation of this design through the following result: Anselm neither felt nor saw his God<sup>53</sup>; he only saw to a certain extent, he did not see how God is because of the darkness in his intellect, that is, its limits<sup>54</sup>. Also solidary with the characterization of the limits of the intellect as darkness, is the adoption of Augustine's doctrine of divine illumination. However, in Anselm, this doctrine does not explain Man's intelligible knowledge; rather it explains the limits of Man's knowledge of God: the divine sun is so intense that the gaze of the human intellect cannot fixate and contemplate it<sup>55</sup>. Hence, Anselm's intellect did not see how God is, that is, he could not contemplate it in the indivisible unity of its attributes. To envisage the essential unity of the divine attributes: such is beyond the reach of the human intellect<sup>56</sup>.

Therefore, according to this assessment, the fact that Anselm's argument bears an intellectual intuition of the divine essence, from which the perfection of existence could be deduced – which, as was seen, is a commonplace in the interpretation and criticism of this argument – is out of the question. That which Anselm designates as “sole argument” (*solum argumentum*) – «that greater than

<sup>52</sup> “Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam, quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum; sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere veritatem tuam, quam credit et amat cor meum.” *Pros* 1, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 100, 15-18.

<sup>53</sup> “Nam si non invenisti deum tuum: quomodo est ille hoc quod invenisti, et quod illum tam certa veritate et vera certitudine intellexisti? Si vero invenisti: quid est, quod non sentis quod invenisti? Cur non te sentit, domine deus, anima mea, si invenit te?” *Pros* 14, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 111, 11-15.

<sup>54</sup> “An et veritas et lux est quod vidit, et tamen nondum te vidit, quia vidit te aliquatenus, sed non vidit te sicuti es? - [...]. Intendit se ut plus videat, et nihil videt ultra hoc quod vidit nisi tenebras; immo non videt tenebras, quae nullae sunt in te, sed videt se non plus posse videre propter tenebras suas.” *Pros* 14, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 111, 20-21, 24-25; p. 112, 1.

<sup>55</sup> “Vere, domine, haec est lux inaccessibilis, in qua habitas. Vere enim non est aliud quod hanc penetret, ut ibi te pervideat. Vere ideo hanc non video, quia nimia mihi est; et tamen quidquid video, per illam video, sicut infirmus oculus quod videt per lucem solis videt, quam in ipso sole nequit aspicere. Non potest intellectus meus ad illam. Nimis fulget, non capit illam, nec suffert oculus anima meae diu intendere in illam. Reverberatur fulgore, vincitur amplitudinem, obruitur immensitate, confunditur capacitate.” *Pros* 16, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 112, 20-27.

<sup>56</sup> “Quid es, domine, quid es, quid te intelliget cor meum? Certe vita es, sapientia es, veritas es, bonitas es, beatitudo es, aeternitas es, et omne verum bonum es. Multa sunt haec, non potest angustus intellectus meus tot uno simul intuitu videre, ut omnibus simul delectetur.” *Pros* 18, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 114, 14-17.

which nothing can be thought»<sup>57</sup> – may then give rise, in chapter XV, to an even more accurate divine name – «something greater than which may be thought» (*quiddam maius quam cogitari possit*)<sup>58</sup> – thereby signifying the limits of Man’s intelligibility of God.

### 3. A language of the mind: *cogitatio*

We are aware that we know, and what we know through the senses or through the intellect, when we think about what we know. But what is to think? Saint Anselm uses the verb *cogitare* to express the conscious thought in the act of knowing. The verb *cogitare* had already made its decisive entry in the Latin vocabulary of rational psychology by influence of Saint Augustine, who had applied *cogitare* to the function of recollecting data from memory, thereby constituting a second kind of thinking in relation to *intelligere*<sup>59</sup>. In the footsteps of Augustine, Anselm resumes the *cogitare* in relation to the act of knowing, that is, to the act of feeling be it through the senses or through the intellect.

From what we know through the senses, the images we produce in thought are all the truer, the more similar they are to the things perceived, as is illustrated by the image of an absent body, which is formed in the tip of our thought (*acies cogitationis*)<sup>60</sup>. And this image is also the word through which that same body

<sup>57</sup> It is in the reply to Gaunilo that Anselm assumes the strength of the concept underlying this periphrasis as sole, self-sufficient argument, in comparison with the concept of supreme (*maius omnibus*), which does not contradict neither the possibility of negating its existence nor the possibility of being supplanted by something greater, even if merely in thought: “Quid enim si quis dicat esse aliquid maius omnibus quae sunt, et idipsum tamen posse cogitari non esse et aliquid maius eo etiam si non sit, posse tamen cogitari? An hic sic aperte inferri potest: non est ergo maius omnibus quae sunt, sicut ibi apertissime diceretur: ergo non est quo maius cogitari nequit? Illud namque alio indiget argumento quam hoc quod dicitur ‘omnibus maius’; in isto vero non est opus alio quam hoc ipso quod sonat ‘quo maius cogitari non possit’.” *Quid ad haec respondeat editor ipsius libelli (Resp)* [5.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 135, 14-20.

<sup>58</sup> “Ergo domine, non solum es quo maius cogitari nequit, sed es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit.” *Pros* 15, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 112, 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> See S. Augustine, *Confessionum* X, 11, 18; *De Trinitate* XIV, 6, 8 - 7, 10.

<sup>60</sup> “Quamcumque enim rem mens seu per corporis imaginationem seu per rationem cupit veraciter cogitare, eius utique similitudinem quantum valet in ipsa sua cogitatione conatur exprimere. Quod quanto verius facit, tanto verius rem ipsam cogitat. Et hoc quidem, cum cogitat aliquid aliud quod ipsa non est, et maxime cum aliquod cogitat corpus, clarius percipitur. Cum enim cogito notum mihi hominem absentem, formatur acies cogitationis meae in talem imaginem eius, qualem illam per visum oculorum in memoriam attraxi.” *Mon* 33, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 15-23.

is said in thought<sup>61</sup>. In accordance with the imagination of the sensible, we also produce in thought images and words of things known intellectually, including the rational mind itself. Self-consciousness is not, in this point, any different from the consciousness of the things of the world. The rational mind is known via the intellect, when one thinks, and the thought of oneself constitutes an image in one's likeness, formed from one's own self-impression<sup>62</sup>. Conceived by analogy with sensible knowledge, the intellectual self-knowledge of the mind results from an impression of oneself which thought converts into an image of itself, which is its own word. But the rational mind is not to be distinguished from its own thought but conceptually (*ratione sola*), not in reality, for the thought of oneself, or the image of oneself, or one's own word, is not a reality separable from the mind itself<sup>63</sup>. Conversely, the realities separated from the mind do not directly impress upon thought, for the act of thinking them depends on the mediation of the corporeal senses or the images kept in memory<sup>64</sup>. It is certain that self-consciousness also depends on one's own memory, but this memory accompanies the self inseparably<sup>65</sup>. In a word, self-consciousness is as the consciousness of the world, but the latter is mediated and separated from the world, whereas the first is not separable from the mind.

The theme of self-consciousness reappears in the texts of the dialogue between Gaunilo and Anselm regarding the argument of the *Proslogion*.

In the text of Gaunilo's criticism, the theme appears associated to a distinction between the meanings of the verbs *intelligere* and *cogitare*: the verb *intelligere* has a more circumscribed meaning than that of *cogitare*, for one cannot intelligere

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<sup>61</sup> "Quae imago in cogitatione verbum est eiusdem hominis, quem cogitando dico." *Mon* 33, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 23-24.

<sup>62</sup> "Nam nulla ratione negari potest, cum mens rationalis seipsam cogitando intelligit, imaginem ipsius nasci in sua cogitatione; immo ipsam cogitationem sui esse suam imaginem ad eius similitudinem tamquam ex eius impressione formatam." *Mon* 33, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 12-15.

<sup>63</sup> "Habet igitur mens rationalis, cum se cogitando intelligit, secum imaginem suam ex se natam, id est cogitationem sui ad suam similitudinem quasi sua impressione formatam; quamvis ipsa se a sua imagine non nisi ratione sola separare possit. Quae imago eius verbum eius est." *Mon* 33, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 52, 24-28.

<sup>64</sup> "Sed in hominis cogitatione cum cogitat aliquid quod extra eius mentem est, non nascitur verbum cogitatae rei ex ipsa re, quoniam ipsa absens est a cogitationis intuitu, sed ex rei aliqua similitudine vel imagine quae est in cogitantis memoria, aut forte quae tunc cum cogitat per corporeum sensum ex re praesenti in mentem attrahitur." *Mon* 62, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 72, 14-18.

<sup>65</sup> "Quoniam namque mens humana non semper se cogitat, sicut sui semper meminit: liquet cum se cogitat quia verbum eius nascitur de memoria." *Mon* 48, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 63, 17-19.

falsehoods, whereas it is possible to think falsehoods through cogitation. Hence, it would be more rigorous to say that one cannot intelligize that God does not exist, instead of saying that one cannot think this, for it is possible to think that God does not exist, as is illustrated by the insipient in the psalm, which in his heart says: “God does not exist” (Ps. 12, 1; 52, 1). However, Gaunilo doubts he can think of himself that he does not exist, when he knows (*scire*) with all certainty that he does exist. Self-consciousness involves a knowledge that seems not to be able to stray from the truth of existence itself. Gaunilo even suggests a comparison between the knowledge of oneself and the thought (*cogitatio*) on God, admitting a greater degree of certainty in the knowledge of oneself than in the thought – not intelligence – on God, as far as the knowledge of existence is concerned<sup>66</sup>.

Anselm, in his reply to Gaunilo’s criticism, resumes the comparison but completely inverts the terms of the relation as to the certainty of existence: only God, as something insurmountably thinkable, cannot be thought as not existing, in accordance with the attributes of eternity, simplicity and indivisible omnipresence; without such attributes, the I, which arose and knows of itself, may think of itself as not existing, and Anselm is even in awe at Gaunilo’s doubt in this regard<sup>67</sup>. Hence, in Anselm’s view, the consciousness of God is more certain than the consciousness of oneself.

As to the distinction in meaning between the verbs *intelligere* and *cogitare*, although a strict meaning of *intelligere*, which excludes the false, is possible, Anselm’s use of the verb *intelligere* is not laden with this restriction, since he admits that false and doubtful things are to be understood and therefore exist in the intellect<sup>68</sup>. However, it is precisely because this restriction does not apply to the

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<sup>66</sup> “Cum autem dicitur quod summa res ista non esse nequeat cogitari: melius fortasse diceretur, quod non esse aut etiam posse non esse non possit intelligi. Nam secundum proprietatem verbi istius falsa nequeunt intelligi, quae possunt utique eo modo cogitari, quo deum non esse insipienti cogitavit. Et me quoque esse certissime scio, sed et posse non esse nihilominus scio. Summum vero illud quod est, scilicet deus, et esse et non esse non posse indubitanter intelligo. Cogitare autem me non esse quamdiu esse certissime scio, nescio utrum possim. Sed si possum: cur non et quidquid aliud eadem certitudine scio? Si autem non possum: non erit iam istud proprium deo.” Gaunilo, *Quid ad haec respondeat quidam pro insipiente* [7.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 129, 10-19.

<sup>67</sup> “Illud vero solum non potest cogitari non esse, in quo nec initium nec finem nec partium coniunctionem, et quod nisi semper et ubique totum ulla invenit cogitatio. - Scito igitur quia potes te non esse, quamdiu esse certissime scis; quod te miror dixisse nescire.” *Resp* [4.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 134, 4-8.

<sup>68</sup> “Nam si falsa et dubia hoc modo intelliguntur et sunt in intellectu, quia cum dicuntur, audiens intelligit quid dicens significet, nihil prohibet quod dixi intelligi et esse in intellectu.” *Resp* [6.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 136, 8-10.

verb *cogitare* that the latter is elected in the language of Anselm's argument. The false may obviously be thought (*cogitari*), as in the case of thinking that nothing in existence exists except that which is insurmountably thinkable<sup>69</sup>. In this sole case, the deprivation of existence would contradict the superiority of necessary existence, according to the proof of the *Proslogion*, as well as the aforementioned attributes of eternity, simplicity and indivisible omnipresence. Thought, understood as *cogitatio*, is the most inclusive and panoramic level of consciousness in the human mind, encompassing the images of the world, the impression of oneself, the intelligible and the unintelligible, the true and the false, and therefore also the opportunity to fictionally simulate the existence of that which does not exist, as well as the non-existence of that which exists. Above all, thought cannot contradict itself<sup>70</sup>; contradiction is its only notable restriction, according to Anselm's philosophy. Hence, despite its amplitude, thought is not arbitrary: it is rational.

Thought (*cogitatio*) is also described as the language of the mind (*dicere in mente*) and therefore belongs to the order of language as a whole. Anselm distinguishes three levels of discourse: the first one consists of sensibly saying things through sensible words; the second one consists of thinking words that mean things; and the third one consists of thinking signified things themselves<sup>71</sup>. Of the three levels of verbal language, the second and the third are levels of mental language, which is thought. The second level is the one which enables us to explain the possibility of thinking words without understanding their meaning, as is the case of the insipient, who thinks that God does not exist<sup>72</sup>. In turn,

<sup>69</sup> "Nam et si nulla quae sunt possint intelligi non esse, omnia tamen possunt cogitari non esse, praeter id quod summe est." *Resp* [4.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 133, 30; p. 134, 1-2.

<sup>70</sup> "Multa namque cogitamus non esse quae scimus esse, et multa esse quae quae non esse scimus; non existimando, sed fingendo ita esse ut cogitamus. Et quidem possumus cogitare aliquid non esse, quamdiu scimus esse, quia simul et illud possumus et istud scimus. Et non possumus cogitare non esse, quamdiu scimus esse, quia non possumus cogitare esse simul et non esse." *Resp* [4.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 134, 8-13.

<sup>71</sup> "Frequenti namque usu cognoscitur, quia rem unam tripliciter loqui possumus. Aut enim res loquimur signis sensibilibus, id est quae sensibus corporeis sentiri possunt sensibilibus utendo; aut eadem signa, quae foris sensibilia sunt, intra nos insensibiliter cogitando; aut nec sensibilibus nec insensibiliter his signis utendo, sed res ipsas vel corporum imaginatione vel rationis intellectu pro rerum ipsarum diversitate intus in nostra mente dicendo." *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 24, 29-31; p. 25, 1-4.

<sup>72</sup> "Aliter enim cogitatur res cum vox eam significans cogitatur, aliter cum id ipsum quod res est intelligitur. Illo itaque modo potest cogitari deus non esse, isto vero minime." *Pros* 4, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 103, 18-20.

the third level is that which implies understanding the meaning of words, and as such is the one Anselm most values from the point of view of knowledge: by mentally reporting known reality, it is the natural and universal language of all peoples<sup>73</sup>. But in relation to the same known reality, discourse is divided into multiple words according to the individual point of view of each thinking mind<sup>74</sup>; it is the speech of the mind, or of reason (*mentis sive rationis locutio*), which envisages things themselves with the tip of the thought (*acie cogitationis*)<sup>75</sup>; by expressing through the tip of the mind (*in acie mentis*) some similitude in the signified thing, this is the level of language that comes closer to reality, thereby justifying the remaining levels, and therefore one can say that it is the proper and principal word of what is real (*proprium et principale rei verbum*)<sup>76</sup>; and, in each thinking mind, it is also divided into multiple words according to the diversity of things thought<sup>77</sup>. In truth, mental language is a gaze of thought over things<sup>78</sup>, a second gaze in relation to the knowledge of the similitudes of things, which are contained in memory. To think one thing is to say it through the mind, and the word of the real is the thought (*cogitatio*) that is formed in the likeness of the thing, through memory<sup>79</sup>. Human science is therefore a field

<sup>73</sup> “Hae vero tres loquendi varietates singulae verbis sui generis constant. Sed illius quam tertiam et ultimam posui locutionis verba, cum de rebus non ignoratis sunt, naturalia sunt et apud omnes gentes sunt eadem.” *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 25, 10-11.

<sup>74</sup> “Si enim plures homines unum aliquid cogitatione dicant: tot eius videntur esse verba, quot sunt cogitantes, quia in singulorum cogitationibus verbum eius est.” *Mon* 62, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 72, 10-12.

<sup>75</sup> “Mentis autem sive rationis locutionem hic intelligo, non cum voces rerum significativae cogitantur, sed cum res ipsae vel futurae vel iam existentes acie cogitationis in mente conspiciuntur.” *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 24, 27-29.

<sup>76</sup> “Et quoniam alia omnia verba propter haec sunt inventa: ubi ista sunt, nullum aliud verbum est necessarium ad rem cognoscendam; et ubi ista esse non possunt, nullum aliud est utile ad rem ostendendam. Possunt etiam non absurde dici tantum veriora, quanto magis rebus quarum sunt verba similia sunt et eas expressius signant. Exceptis namque rebus illis, quibus ipsis utimur pro nominibus suis ad easdem significandas, ut sunt quaedam voces velut ‘a’ vocalis, exceptis inquam his nullum aliud verbum sic videtur rei simile cuius est verbum, aut sic eam exprimit, quomodo illa similitudo, quae in acie mentis rem ipsam cogitantis exprimitur. Illud igitur iure dicendum est maxime proprium et principale rei verbum.” *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 25, 12-22.

<sup>77</sup> “Item si unus homo cogitet plura aliqua, tot verba sunt in mente cogitantis, quot sunt res cogitatae.” *Mon* 62, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 72, 12-13.

<sup>78</sup> “Nihil autem aliud est summo spiritui huiusmodi dicere quam quasi cogitando intueri, sicut nostrae mentis locutio non aliud est quam cogitantis inspectio.” *Mon* 63, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 73, 10-12.

<sup>79</sup> “Rem etenim cogitare cuius memoriam habemus, hoc est mente eam dicere; verbum vero rei est ipsa cogitatio ad eius similitudinem ex memoria formata.” *Mon* 48, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 63, 20-22.

where the similitudes of things establish a relation of adequacy towards their respective essences<sup>80</sup>.

Anselm's elaboration of the theme of mental language, which prepares the theology of the Word in the *Monologion*, is an echo of the theory of mental word that Saint Augustine develops in *De Trinitate*<sup>81</sup>. But apart from the theological motivation, the concept of mental speech, both in Augustine and Anselm, underscores that human thought is dependent on the knowledge of reality: knowledge is the fundamental basis of our thought, and thought is always an expression of our knowledge of the world. One could even say that Augustine's and Anselm's concept of mental speech, which intertwines thought and known reality, does not favor the apriorism of thought. Thought is image and word, and the latter refer to things which are respectively imagined and said – thought – insofar as they are known by the individual mind. Consequently, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to conceive a thought that is completely *a priori*, that is, completely separated from the individual experience of the world, in the scope of Anselm's theory of knowledge.

However, human knowledge has boundaries, and Anselm does not ignore this, as was seen above. Therefore, we ask: can we think beyond that which we can know? Indeed, but only by departing from what we know, based on what we know and by comparison with what we know. There are always reflexes of the world known to us in what we think. We can think and paint an animal which we have never seen, but we can only do so from other known things<sup>82</sup>. From the image of a body we can think a sensible figure, and from a notion (*ratio*) we can think the universal essence<sup>83</sup>. But can we think that which has no body nor universal essence, such as the ineffable?

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<sup>80</sup> “Nam nulli dubium creatas substantias multo aliter esse in seipsis quam in nostra scientia. In seipsis namque sunt per ipsam suam essentiam; in nostra vero scientia non sunt earum essentiae, sed earum similitudines. Restat igitur ut tanto verius sint in seipsis quam in nostra scientia, quanto verius alicubi sunt per suam essentiam quam per suam similitudinem.” *Mon* 36, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 54, 18-19; p. 55, 1-6.

<sup>81</sup> See S. Augustine, *De Trinitate* IX, 6, 9 - 11, 16; XV, 10, 17 - 11, 20; 15, 25. One must bear in mind that this work is the source that Saint Anselm explicitly assumes for his *Monologion*: See *Mon*, Prologus, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 8, 8-14.

<sup>82</sup> “Quamquam enim homo tale aliquod animal possit cogitando vive pingendo quale nusquam sit confingere: nequaquam tamen hoc facere valet, nisi componendo in eo partes, quas ex rebus alias cognitis in memoria attraxit.” *Mon* 11, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 26, 13-16.

<sup>83</sup> “Per corporis quidem imaginem, ut cum eius sensibilem figuram imaginatur; per rationem vero, ut cum eius universalem essentiam, quae est ‘animal rationale mortale’, cogitat.” *Mon* 10, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 25, 7-9.

In language and thought, that is, both in the external and the internal languages of the mind, there are two manners of speaking: a proper mode and an indirect mode, that is, one mediated by another thing (*per aliud*). In external speech we say many things not in a proper manner, but indirectly, by means of other things (*per aliud*); for instance, when we express feelings metaphorically through colours – this is what Anselm deems as speaking in enigmas (*per aenigmata*)<sup>84</sup>. In the internal speech of the mind, which is thought, we sometimes see something not as it is in reality, but by means of some similitude or image; for instance, when we see someone's face in a mirror – this is what Anselm understands by mirrored vision (*in speculo*)<sup>85</sup>. Without ever citing Saint Paul, thus resonates, in the scope of the meditation *sola ratione*, that is the *Monologion*, Paul's sentence (1 Cor 13, 12): «For now we see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face». Indeed, it is not but through enigmas and in mirrored fashion that we can say and see the ineffable: through enigmas, that is, metaphorically, for not even the names “wisdom” and “essence” signify the ineffable with property; and in mirrored fashion, that is, in the mirror of things created<sup>86</sup>. But, among these, which serves best as mirror; that is, which offers the best similitude of the ineffable?

In the *Monologion*, Anselm proceeds with Saint Augustine's choice and elects the rational mind, because not only is this naturally the more similar essence, but it is also the one that can progress the furthest in the direction of the supreme essence<sup>87</sup>. In the *Proslogion*, Anselm tries other alternatives, thus attempting to

<sup>84</sup> “Saepe namque multa dicimus, quae proprie sicut sunt non exprimimus, sed per aliud significamus id quod proprie aut nolimus aut non possumus deprimere; ut cum per aenigmata loquimur.” *Mon* 65, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 76, 11-14.

<sup>85</sup> “Et saepe videmus aliquid non proprie, quemadmodum res ipsa est, sed per aliquam similitudinem aut imaginem; ut cum vultum alicuius consideramus in speculo. Sic quippe unam eandem rem dicimus et non dicimus, videmus et non videmus. Dicimus et videmus per aliud, non dicimus et non videmus per suam proprietatem.” *Mon* 65, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 76, 14-18.

<sup>86</sup> “Nam quaecumque nomina de illa natura dici posse videntur: non tam mihi eam ostendunt per proprietatem, quam per aliquam innuunt similitudinem. Etenim cum earundem vocum significationes cogito, familiarius concipio mente quod in rebus factis conspicio, quam id quod omnem humanum intellectum transcendere intelligo. [...]. Nam nec nomen sapientiae mihi sufficit ostendere illud, per quod omnia facta sunt de nihilo et servantur a nihilo; nec nomen essentiae mihi valet exprimere illud, quod per singularem altitudinem longe est supra omnia et per naturalem proprietatem valde est extra omnia.” *Mon* 65, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 76, 22-26, 29-32; p. 77, 1.

<sup>87</sup> “Patet itaque quia, sicut sola est mens rationalis inter omnes creaturas, quae ad eius investigationem assurgere valeat, ita nihilominus eadem sola est, per quam maxime ipsamet ad eiusdem inventionem proficere queat. Nam iam cognitum est, quia haec illi maxime per naturalis essentiae propinquat similitudinem.” *Mon* 66, ed. Schmitt, I, p. 77, 17-21.

avoid the anthropocentrism that the election of the human image incontrovertibly comports. One of them is to resume the diversity and order of goods, which had allowed him to conclude on the necessity for a supreme good (*sumum bonum*) in the first way of the *Monologion*. Against Gaunilo, who rejected any base of universal knowledge (generic or specific), in order to attain the supreme, Anselm sustains that much can be conjectured (*conicere*) on the insurmountably thinkable from the finite and mutable goods known to us, through the progressive elimination of the boundaries of beginning and end and mutability itself: in a gradual ascension through the order of surmountable goods, via the suppression of all traits of finitude, it is possible to conceive a supreme immutable good as that which comes nearest and is most similar to the insurmountably thinkable: «that greater than which nothing can be thought»<sup>88</sup>. Therefore, Anselm's argument in the *Proslogion* may be understood as a purified and accurate version of the first way of the *Monologion*. Thought through the suppression of finitude, that which is insurmountably thinkable cannot but be an infinite good, and hence it cannot be condoned with Gaunilo's caricature of the lost island, which is an image of finitude, no matter how perfect and teeming with treasures the island is<sup>89</sup>.

In the path towards the supreme good, Anselm and many other medieval thinkers have taken it upon themselves to think the qualitative infinite of perfection in regard to God. In our days, our thought is presented with other infinities, infinities of a quantitative order, through computational thought. Can there be any

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<sup>88</sup> "Item quod dicis 'quo maius cogitari nequit' secundum rem vel ex genere tibi vel specie notam te cogitare auditum vel in intellectu habere non posse, quoniam nec ipsam rem nosti, nec eam ex alia simili potes conicere: palam est rem aliter sese habere. Quoniam namque omne minus bonum in tantum est simile maiori bono in quanto est bonum: patet cuilibet rationali menti, quia de bonis minoribus ad maiora conscendendo ex iis quibus aliquid maius cogitari potest, multum possumus conicere illud quo nihil potest maius cogitari. Quis enim verbi gratia vel hoc cogitare non potest, etiam si non credat in re esse quod cogitat, scilicet si bonum est aliquid quod initium et finem habet, multo melius esse bonum, quod licet incipiat non tamen desinit; et sicut istud illo melius sit, ita isto esse melius illud quod nec finem habet nec initium, etiam si semper de praeterito per praesens transeat ad futurum; et sive sit in re aliquid huiusmodi sive non sit, valde tamen eo melius esse id quod nullo modo indiget vel cogitur mutari vel moveri? An hoc cogitari non potest, aut aliquid hoc maius cogitari potest? Aut non est hoc ex iis quibus maius cogitari valet, conicere id quo maius cogitari nequit? Est igitur unde possit conici 'quo maius cogitari nequeat'." *Resp* [8.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 137, 11-28.

<sup>89</sup> See Gaunilo, *Quid ad haec respondeat quidam pro insipiente* [6.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 128; "Palam autem iam videtur 'quo non valet cogitari maius' non posse cogitari non esse, quod tam certa ratione veritatis existit. [...]. Si enim posset cogitari non esse, cogitari posset habere principium et finem. Sed hoc non potest." Anselm, *Resp* [1.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 133, 10-11, 15-17.

connection between the quantitative infinities and the qualitative infinite of perfection, or is the latter irremediably lost with the discredit of classical Metaphysics? We would like to know the answer to this, but we are still far from fathoming any answer.

Yet, the supreme good is far from replenishing the similitudes which Anselm privileged in thinking God as something insurmountably thinkable. Indeed, there are still two similitudes which Anselm privileges in the comprehension of his sole argument, according to his replica to Gaunilo's criticism: namely, the world and time thought as totalities. In what consists the similitude of world and time with that greater than which nothing can be thought? The world is present everywhere and time is present in every moment, and in this both resemble the insurmountably thinkable, in conformity with the divine attribute of omnipresence. However, this similitude also bears differences. The first one is that world and time are composites and as such cannot exist necessarily, in such a way that their inexistence is unthinkable, for they are thinkable as non-existing, just as their respective parts (in the world some parts do not exist, and in time some moments do not exist when others exist). The composite nature of world and time renders them dissimilar from the insurmountably thinkable as to their necessary existence, which condones with the divine attribute of simplicity. The second difference also stems from the composite nature of world and time as totalities: namely, the world is present in all its parts, but not all of it is present in any of its parts, and time is also present in all moments, but not all of it is present in any of its moments; quite on the contrary, something insurmountably thinkable is all of it present in every part and every moment, because it is an indivisible totality, again in conformity with the divine attribute of simplicity. In a word, the omnipresence of world and time is divisible, whereas the omnipresence of God, as something insurmountably thinkable, is indivisible. Hence, God differs from world and time insofar as it exists wholly, that is, totally or indivisibly, in all places and all the time<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> "Procul dubio quidquid alicubi aut aliquando non est: etiam si est alicubi aut aliquando, potest tamen cogitari numquam et nusquam, sicut non est alicubi aut aliquando. Nam quod heri non fuit et hodie est: sicut heri non fuisse intelligitur, ita numquam esse subintelligi potest. Et quod hic non est et alibi est: sicut non est hic, ita potest cogitari nusquam esse. Similiter cuius partes singulae non sunt, ubi aut quando sunt aliae partes, eius omnes partes et ideo ipsum totum possunt cogitari numquam aut nusquam esse. Nam et si dicatur tempus semper esse et mundus ubique, non tamen illud totum semper aut iste totus est ubique. Et sicut singulae partes temporis non sunt quando aliae sunt, ita possunt numquam esse cogitari. Et singulae mundi partes, sicut non sunt, ubi aliae sunt, ita subintelligi possunt nusquam esse. Sed et quod partibus coniunctum

Therefore, by analogy with world and time, that is, in the dissimilar similitude of world and time, Anselm ascertains the concept of God as an indivisibly omnipresent whole, which is the concept of his sole argument. Through the similitudes of world and time, Saint Anselm succeeds in supplanting the unavoidable anthropocentrism and the anthropomorphism of any theology centered around the human image, as was Saint Augustine's theology.

Saint Anselm also diverges from Saint Augustine regarding the subjectivity of time. World and time were, in Anselm's view, objective totalities, independent from the human mind. Since then and until today, the progress of science has profoundly altered the human perception of world and time: the sensible world of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages has become a universe populated by an immensity of galaxies and time became relative, in multiple ways, thus amplifying Saint Augustine's intuition. And yet, Saint Anselm's lesson endures: something insurmountably thinkable cannot necessarily exist but as something greater than the universe and time, the realities which most resemble it. Through this our knowledge of reality is expanded; and the basis of our thought on God is amplified.

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est, cogitatione dissolvi et non esse potest. Quare quidquid alicubi aut aliquando totum non est: etiam si est, potest cogitari non esse. Alioquin si est, non est quo maius cogitari non possit; quod non convenit. Nullatenus ergo alicubi aut aliquando totum non est, sed semper et ubique totum est." *Resp* [1.], ed. Schmitt, I, p. 131, 18-33; p. ,0132, 1-2.