Poetic/Dialectic:
The Confluence of Poetry and Philosophy
in St. Anselm’s Theology

by

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ABSTRACT

St. Anselm of Canterbury is an important figure in the history of both theology and philosophy. However, his distinction as a writer of poetry in his era remains hitherto under-appreciated. The thesis of this work argues that we find in St. Anselm’s body of work a confluence of poetry and philosophy that models a mode of theology valuable to the contemporary context. Utilizing a new Poetic/Dialectic Analytic methodology, it researches the literature that was most influential in Anselm’s monastic culture including the trivium curriculum, Boethius, Augustine, and the Psalmic liturgical tradition. After demonstrating a Medieval confluence of poetry and philosophy, the body of Anselm’s own work is likewise investigated, followed by an in depth poetic/dialectic analysis of his greatest work, the Proslogion. Finally, a discussion of the theontic semiotics of Anselm’s Neo-platonic participatory ontology connects his understanding of God’s nature as the source of all being with a doxological account of language that both articulates and demonstrates a form of theology that is simultaneously poetry and philosophy.
I sing of the King in simplicity.
Tripping out on the triple singularity;
   Tripped up by the singular triplicity.
The glimmer of glamorous Grammar
Shimmers through my amorous stammers:
   Beautiful Truth is inviolable,
      Undeniable, unpliable,
         Vitally viable, reliable,
   Intelligible though rarely legible,
We’re barely eligible to receive it
And our ability to conceive it incredibly negligible.
To

My mother, Deborah Guérette

for her intuitive sense of the Beauty of God, and her poetic ingenuity

and

My father, Frank Guérette

for his intensive search for the Truth of God, and his philosophic acuity
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Likewise, Dr. Robert Sweetman has been a considerable shaping influence on this project, as his early critique turned me quickly to immersing myself in the ancient eleventh century time period. I am certain there is still much he would add to my presentation, yet I am truly grateful to have had a medieval scholar of such breadth speak into its formation.

This journey of exploring the relationship between poetry and philosophy began in my Master’s work at the University of Cambridge, and I must therefore thank Catherine Pickstock for her suggestion that I delve into Anselm in order to explore the topic. That her work on the ontology of participation and the doxology of language would actually develop into the key theme of the work seems more than fortuitous.

Outside of academia I must first thank my amazing wife Maegan, who allowed me the time to leave our household and three young children in order to bunker down and complete this work. Both her beauty, and her eye for beauty, best inspire my understanding of participating in the Nature of God.

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With Thanksgiving,

Cyril Guérette

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1. **INTRODUCTION: PHILOSOPHY, POETRY, AND THEOLOGY**

The poetic character of thinking is still veiled over.

Where it shows itself, it is for a long time like the utopism of a half-poetic intellect.

But poetry that thinks is in truth the topology of Being.

Martin Heidegger – “The Thinker As Poet”

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**The Ancient Quarrel Between Poetry and Philosophy**

The relationship between Poetry and Philosophy, to be sure, has often been marked by contumacy on both sides, evidenced most famously in Plato’s citation of “the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy.” This foundational thinker is routinely criticized for his diatribes against poetry in the name of philosophy, especially as found in the *Republic*. Yet for him the term ‘poetry’ referred specifically to the available corpus of Greek literature, the majority penned by Homer and Hesiod. It could be argued that he does not attack what we today consider the realm of poetics in general, but rather

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specific poetical works and on the grounds that these works have a deleterious effect on
the morals of the general populace as “an erroneous representation is made of the nature
of gods and heroes.” This qualification in the universality of his diatribes is corroborated
by the fact that Plato explicitly delineates a positive role for the poet in his ideal Republic
- that of celebration of the true nature of the gods and dissemination of the philosophers’
conclusions. The delight of poetry, dangerous at the service of sophists, can become a
powerful propaedeutic in the service of philosophy. Furthermore, Plato elsewhere
affirms his culture’s general view of poetic utterance as divinely inspired. Thus, what he
ultimately proposes is, negatively, an excising of the morally and theologically harmful
aspects of the poetic corpus, while at the same time recommending, positively, an
alternative poetic, one that supports and makes delightful the truths uncovered and
proclaimed in philosophy. This is evidenced in the facility in which Plato himself
exercised poetic expression in his dialogues.

The complex relationship between poetry and philosophy, of course, continued
unabated. As time progressed, advances in philosophic theology, fuelled by the
rediscovery of Aristotle, were paralleled by a poetic expansion via Christian hymnody.
The Medieval period can be characterized by a fascination with both poetry and
philosophy, and significant advancements were being made in both. In fact, the Middle
and High Medieval Periods (800-1300 AD) were characterized by an effective fusing of
poetic and dialectic modes of discourse. The writings of St. Anselm in particular, it will

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3 Plato, The Republic, II. “God is always to be represented as he truly is, whatever be the sort of
poetry, epic, lyric, or tragic, in which the representation is given.”
4 Cf. Ibid., X. “hymns to the gods and praises of famous men are the only poetry which ought to be
admitted into our State.”
6 Susan B. Levin, The Ancient Quarrel Between Philosophy and Poetry Revisited - Plato and the
be argued, demonstrate a magnificent miscegenation of these two modes of language within his corpus, and especially within a single document, the *Proslogion*. Such a fusion deserves further investigation given the contemporary fascination with language and semiology. Postmodernist philosophy has deliberately blurred the lines of philosophy and poetry, in works such as Derrida’s *Glas*, or as evidenced by Heidegger’s leaning upon Holdërlin’s poetry so explicitly in his own philosophy. In this light, Anselm’s own fusion of Poetry and Philosophy becomes important to contemporary theology in thinking through the relationship of these linguistic modes which have garnered such important focus in academic circles.

**Anselm: A Theological Alternative**

In contemporary academic culture the Humanities are saturated with the postmodern fascination with language, and both poets and philosophers have deliberately blurred the line between literature and philosophy. This provides a challenge to the theologian if s/he intends to contribute to the discipline, and if in turn the discipline of theology is to contribute to our culture at large. The Christian thinker must ask whether or not there is an explicitly theological conception of the relationship between poetry and philosophy that may serve as an alternative to the dominant academic position of fusing the poetic and dialectic through the rejection of theological Truth. Is there a way to see an interaction, and indeed unity, of poetry and philosophy without rejecting the theological conviction that the truth of God not only exists, but is actually personally

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accessible in and through human language? How can theology respond to the equation of poetry and philosophy brought forth by atheistic and agnostic theorists?

It is the position of this dissertation that if theologians wish to gain any perspective on the relationship between poetry and philosophy, they might turn to one of their own, a Christian writer who finds a way to balance both the claims of the poetic and claims of the dialectic. The majority of Medieval Theology historically looked at all language, both poetic and philosophic, as a gift from God that connects us with the Divine and the reality which God created. Yet, one man stands out in particular for his importance in both the history of philosophy, and the development of devotional poetry, Anselm of Canterbury. In his most famous document, the *Proslogion*, he presents an amalgam of both the poetic and the dialectic modes of language, which sheds light on the question of how theology can understand the relationship between philosophy and poetry.

Thus, it is the thesis of this proposed study that St. Anselm’s Christian Platonic ontology of linguistic participation in God’s Truth and Beauty serves as an important locus for understanding the confluence of philosophy and poetry in distinctively theological terms.

With Anselm, we come to understand the unique power of theology to conceptualize the relationship between poetry and philosophy. In the *Proslogion*, we witness a literary creation that resists any attempts to categorize it in simple terms as either philosophic or poetic. As Hibbs explains, “he is an example of a thinker and writer who cannot be categorized exclusively as a theologian or a philosopher or a poet. We find in Anselm no romantic opposition of sensation to intellect or of imagination to the
rational capacities of human beings; likewise there is no gulf between thought and life.”

We witness in Anselm, it will be argued, the untroubled and natural confluence of poetry and philosophy in theology.

Anselm is, of course, a product of his culture, and any understanding of his contribution to the conjoining of poetry and philosophy must be understood as part and parcel of the general linguistic theory of the medieval liberal arts and monastic tradition. This attitude, and Anselm’s embodiment of it in particular, can enable the contemporary theologian to formulate a theological alternative to an agnostic or atheistic poetic/dialectic perspective. In fact, the medieval fascination with the union of poetry and philosophy helps explain the fact that the postmodern movement has powered a recent flourishing of medieval studies, particularly in discussions of language in philosophic theology circles.

The Radical Orthodoxy movement has been particularly forthright in their retrieval project, citing Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas, among others, as trustworthy guides in the current philosophic climate. However, reactions to their work have highlighted two major dangers threatening such retrieval projects: 1) nostalgia for the halcyon heights of theology might cause one to overlook the concrete differences in thought that demarcate our period from that of the medieval, that is, a complete retrieval is impossible, and 2) unless the thorough and painstaking work of historical contextualization is properly executed, anachronistic tendencies will more frequently

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creep into the discussion, that is, it is easy to read into medieval theology ideas which are actually a much later theoretical construct.\textsuperscript{12} Furthermore, since the Radical Orthodoxy movement introduced the work of James K. A. Smith into their midst, a debate has surfaced regarding whether their emphasis on the Platonic ontology of participation is useful for contemporary theology.\textsuperscript{13}

Engaging in a retrieval project parallel to that of Radical Orthodoxy - that of exploring in detail the relationship of poetry to philosophy in the life and work of St. Anselm of Canterbury - this study intends to investigate thoroughly the sources upon which he drew in order to mitigate as much as possible the two dangers outlined above. This is followed by an analysis of Anselm’s own works, outlining those works that are more commonly described as philosophic as well as those clearly poetic, and those areas where the two modes of discourse conflate, with special reference to the \textit{Proslogion}. The relationship of poetry to philosophy will then be discussed in the light of the Anselmian categories of Truth and Beauty. Both Truth and Beauty are found grounded in the very nature of language, itself grounded in the very nature of God. Thus, semiology and ontology are fundamentally related. As a result, this study of Anselm provides support for Catherine Pickstock’s contention that the participatory ontology of Christian Platonism is of great importance for contemporary theology.\textsuperscript{14} The project concludes with a discussion of the possible implications of the Anselmian perspective on the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Wayne J. Hankey, “Radical Orthodoxy’s \textit{Poiēsis}: Ideological Historiography and Anti-Modern Polemic,” \textit{American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly} 80.1 (Winter 2006): 1-21, Hankey is especially critical of RO on this point, stating “Radical Orthodoxy’s falsification of the past is compulsive.”
\item James K. A. Smith, \textit{Speech and Theology} (New York: Routledge, 2002), 170-176; Smith, \textit{Introducing Radical Orthodoxy} (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 185-229. It is believed that the conclusion of this study of Anselm will serve to help mitigate some of Smith’s objections to Radical Orthodoxy’s Platonism, demonstrating that a Christian Platonic ontology actually serves as a necessary correlate to his own calls for a Reformed Creational and Incarnational ontology.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
poetic/dialectic relationship for contemporary poetry, philosophy, and theology. In this respect, the ultimate goal is not only to render a historically accurate account of the relationship between poetry and philosophy in Anselm’s literary corpus, but to do so with an eye on how such a discussion may further modern conceptions of this relationship, specifically in relation to the future of the theological enterprise.

**Methodology: Poetic/Dialectic Analytics and Synthetics**

Before attempting a discussion of the relationship between ‘poetry’ and ‘philosophy’ in Anselm, it is important that we establish what is meant when these two words are employed during the course of this investigation. These two terms were chosen because they reflect a distinction in language use that is widely accepted in contemporary culture. In fact, in universities, poetry and philosophy are objects of study in separate disciplines, Literary Studies and Philosophy respectively.

Unfortunately, ‘poetry’ is a notoriously difficult word to define. There is a long tradition of identifying poetry as a single piece or body of literature whose compositional form is characterized by the use of poetic devices (such as metre, rhyme, alliteration, metaphor, etc.). Aristotle, however, rejected the idea that a historical or medical document written in common metre should be the object of study for his science of poetics, as, he argued, they obviously belonged to those distinct sciences.\(^\text{15}\) Instead Aristotle will identify the use of *mimesis*, the imitation of nature, as the defining aspect of poetics.\(^\text{16}\) Poetry, according to this perspective, is characterized by frequent appeals to the affective and emotional dimension of human nature.

\(^{15}\) Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1.1.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., 1.1-1.6.
For the purpose of this study, both of these perspectives are considered useful and mutually enhancing. Poetry can be identified by use of literary devices and/or enhanced affective appeal. There is an important relationship between poetic devices and emotional content. Poetry is studied in the Literature departments of modern universities, where poetic movements and theories are distinguished and discussed rigorously. For Roman Jakobson, the “poetic function” in communication referred to a focus on the message itself, with poetry effectively merging form and function as a cohesive unit.\(^ {17}\) In general, good poetry is usually identified as that which best integrates the dynamic between compositional form and emotional content. Composition and criticism, both the synthesis and analysis of poetry, are referred to as “poetics.” Simply put, poetics is the theory or practice of writing poetry. Poetic analytics utilize various methodologies to examine both the form and content of poetry, including detailed itemization of the poetic devices or narrative strategies employed. Poetic synthetics utilize compositional techniques in order to express emotional and experiential content. Thus, Poetics has both an analytic and synthetic component, meaning that one can both analyze poetry and construct it.

By ‘philosophy’ this project refers to the inquiry into the nature of reality characterized by the use of human reason or logic. This inquiry is often subdivided into three parts: metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.\(^ {18}\) It is useful to keep in mind the literal Greek etymological determination of *philosophia* as “love of wisdom.” This classical definition focuses on the end result of philosophy being an increase in wisdom,


both knowledge and application of such knowledge, theory and praxis. Philosophy is usually its own separate department in universities, making it an important enterprise in contemporary culture. Since its inception Philosophy has been separated into different schools of thought and traditions, often based upon a founding thinker. As an academic discipline, Philosophy utilizes various methodologies, both analytic and synthetic, and is thus regularly further divided into two major types: the analytic tradition of critical philosophy, and the synthetic tradition of speculative philosophy. Critical philosophy focuses on the analysis of propositions and the logical arguments built to support them. Speculative philosophy attempts to synthesize logical arguments in order to support particular propositions; the intended result is often a coherent system, building and improving upon the work of previous philosophers.

Both critical and speculative philosophies depend upon Dialectics – the theory and/or practice of logical argumentation. Critical philosophy employs dialectic analytics to discover the validity of given propositions; speculative philosophy employs dialectic synthetics to construct logically valid arguments to support conclusive propositions. Included in dialectics are formal systems of logic, including propositional logic, hypothetical or categorical syllogisms, and modern model logic. Thus, Dialectics includes both an analytic and a synthetic component, meaning that one can both analyze philosophy and construct it.

What do poetry and philosophy have to do with theology? The analytic and synthetic methods proper to theology include those developed in the study of both poetry and philosophy. Ultimately, theology is the study of God and of all things in relation to God. In traditional theology, God appears to humans both as Truth, discoverable through

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19 Ibid., 18-20.
the discursive analyses of philosophy and Scripture, and Beauty, discoverable through the affective reception of the senses and spirit. Theology often appears in modes borrowed from philosophy, such as the academic dissertation, yet theology can be seen as equally present in the rhyming poetry of the hymnody, whose images are borrowed from the poetry of Scripture itself. Theology is found in narrative or lyric form, as well as in analytic philosophic treatises. Theology, in short, can be philosophic and/or poetic, and often employs the critical and constructive methodologies found in one discipline or the other. For the sake of simplicity, these critical/constructive methodologies can be described as poetic analytics/synthetics and dialectic analytics/synthetics respectively. For example, the poetic analytics of form criticism have had tremendous results in the study of both the poetry in Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek New Testament. Likewise, dialectic analytics are utilized in philosophic theology in order to critique specific philosophers or establish probable theological propositions. Furthermore, systematic theology often employs poetic and dialectic analytics/synthetics in the same project. For example, theologians often use form criticism to establish a contextual reading of a given passage of Scripture, and then apply formal logical criteria to establish a particular theological proposition. In such documents we find the critical and constructive methods common to both poetics and dialectics to be of service to theology. Such a conjoining of poetic and dialectic methodologies in theology should not be surprising given the fact that poetry, philosophy, and theology all share a dependence upon language, which in turn is dependent upon Creation, itself dependent upon God. As a result, poetic and dialectic analytics may both be used in analyzing any given linguistic unit, while poetic and dialectic synthetics may be used in the formulation of the same linguistic unit. For,
as both theory and practice, Poetics and Dialectics may be utilized analytically, in critical
testimony on any given linguistic utterance, and synthetically, in actual construction of a
linguistic utterance.

The present study will include this often overlooked fact that all linguistic
communication includes an analytic and synthetic component as part of its chosen
Poetic/Dialectic methodology, which is primarily conducted in three stages: 1) Poetic
analytics, 2) Dialectic analytics, and finally 3) Poetic/Dialectic synthetics. Poetic
analytics utilize the analytic methodologies and observations gained from literary
criticism, relating to both form and content, while dialectic analytics utilize those
methods common to analytic philosophy and the construction of arguments.
Poetic/Dialectic synthetics attempt to understand how poetry and philosophy relate in the
culture, personality, or works being analyzed. Furthermore, Poetic/Dialectic synthetics
are related to the fact that all human writing involves both a poetic and dialectic
component, as argued by modern linguistics. 20

**Poetic/Dialectic Methodology: an illustration**

To help illustrate what is potentially a confusing concept, but one that is central to
this thesis, the syntagm “Poetic/Dialectic” will itself be subjected to this Poetic/Dialectic
methodology:

1. Poetic analytics.

“Poetic/Dialectic” is a phrase that clearly utilizes the poetic technique of
correspondence in sound, commonly referred to as rhyme. In fact it may be referred to as
a double rhyme as two syllables correspond in sound, “e-tic” and “ec-tic”. The “/” is a

common tool used in literary studies to denote a poetic line break, although traditionally such usage requires a space before and after the slash. However, it may still function here as a line break since poetry often finds itself bending traditions by utilizing what is commonly called “poetic license.” In this case “Poetic” would be the first line of a short poem, while “Dialectic” is the second and final line rendering it:

Poetic
Dialectic

Thus, the phrase “Poetic/Dialectic” may be properly analyzed as a poetic composition.

2. Dialectic analytics.

“Poetic/Dialectic” is a phrase that contains two of Aristotle’s classic philosophic sciences - Poetics and Dialectics. Thus this could be taken as “Poetics/Dialectics”. Poetic(s) is the theory or practice of writing poetry, while Dialectic(s) is the art or practice of discovering the truth by exchange of logical argumentation. The slash in philosophical analysis can lead to ambiguity as it may refer to either a complete separation of Poetic from Dialectic (“the poetic/dialectic division”) or their fusion and unity (“the poetic/dialectic nature of this work”). Thus, as a philosophic proposition, “Poetic/Dialectic” may indicate either a complete separation of poetic from dialectic as mutually exclusive alternatives or a complete identification or conjoining of poetic with dialectic. Thus, “Poetic/Dialectic” may be properly analyzed as a dialectic composition.


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21 In English, these sciences can be referenced to by either the plural or the singular: Poetic(s) or Dialectic(s).
“Poetic/Dialectic” is a linguistic unit that has both poetic and dialectic characteristics. In attempting to synthesize the observations gained from the preceding poetic analytics and dialectic analytics many factors must be considered. For example, “poetic” and “dialectic” can both be either nouns or adjectives. Thus, as nouns, “Poetic/Dialectic” could refer to either the union or separation of two sciences; otherwise it may function as a single adjective, as it is when describing the presently employed “Poetic/Dialectic methodology.” Likewise, the slash may be taken as a poetic line break, rather than conjoining or separating punctuation, allowing the syntagm to describe a form of logical argumentation with poetic elements, a “poetic dialectic.” In yet another usage, the philosopher Alan Badiou includes “Poetic Dialectic” in the title for his comparison of the poetry of Labid ben Rabi’a and Mallarmé, thus indicating a dialectical conversation between two poems. The phrase could also be simply rendered “poetic, dialectic” putting the two words besides each other without comment and allowing all of these possibilities and their associations to echo in the reader’s mind. This would be a case of the poetic use of polysemy - the fact that signs can have multiple meanings - purposely playing off of the ambiguity inherent in language. In poetic terms, it may refer to both form and/or content. Philosophically speaking, “Poetic/Dialectic” may refer to either a specific methodology or a proposition declaring the unity or disunity of poetry and philosophy. It is in the penumbra between the poetic and dialectic analytics of “Poetic/Dialectic” that we find the limits of language revealed. For academic purposes, it is important to be able to distinguish poetry and philosophy in order to facilitate growth in human understanding through separate disciplines. However, in truth both poetry and

philosophy are grounded in language and thus every human composition has a poetic and
dialectic aspect. When using language we may utilize both Poetic/Dialectic analytics –
analyzing the poetic and philosophical elements of a given work – and Poetic/Dialectic
synthetics – creating a literary text by constructing sentences asserting propositional
truths. This interesting observation has become clear by analyzing and synthesizing the
complexities of the phrase “Poetic/Dialectic” itself by means of a Poetic/Dialectic
methodology.

St. Anselm’s Poetic/Dialectic Theology

A Poetic/Dialectic methodology will be implemented throughout the course of
this study in order to discover how poetry and philosophy relate in the theology of St.
Anselm, and thus help to build a theological understanding of the Poetic/Dialectic
dynamic. To properly address this subject, Poetic/Dialectic methodology must be applied
to the monastic culture of the eleventh century, Anselm’s major influences, the writings
of Anselm himself, and his theory of participation. Undoubtedly, there is an ambitious
amount of ground to cover in trying to analyze Anselm’s culture and work either
poetically or dialectically, let alone their relationship together. Fortunately, there has
been a fruitful century of both poetic and dialectic analysis of Anselm that can inform
such a project. In building from this groundwork and relating these studies, an
understanding of St. Anselm’s distinctive position between poetry and philosophy
emerges.

In Chapter 2, it is argued that Anselm found himself in the advantageous position
of furthering the relationship of poetry and philosophy that was handed down to him in
four essential sources for his thought: 1) the Liberal Arts Tradition of the Eleventh
Century; 2) the Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism of Boethius; 3) Augustine’s Christian Rhetoric; and 4) the Liturgical Tradition of the Benedictine Monastic Order. A product of the eleventh century pedagogical tradition found in the monasteries of Northern Europe, Anselm was required to become a master of all three verbal arts of the *trivium* - Grammar, Rhetoric, and Dialectic - and make use of each of them in his literary production. Boethius, and through him, Aristotle, supplied Anselm with the tools needed in developing his natural aptitude for dialectic. Boethius’ *The Consolation of Philosophy* in particular provided evidence that even the most apodictic Aristotelian logic can be placed beside poetic language with considerable effect. Yet, Augustine towers above all others in his explicating the ideal relationship between philosophy and poetry in his *De Doctrina Christiana*. Augustine’s writings, marked by a preference for harmonious endings and numerous other poetic devices, serve as the chief influence on Anselm’s own writing style, while the Augustinian assertion that the goal of all language is ultimately doxological was wholly embraced by the prodigious Benedictine monk. The Scriptures remained to his dying day the ultimate authority upon which Anselm wished his work to be judged; yet he never lost his simple assurance in the ability of human reason to articulate faith and further discover the sublime knowledge of God. The Psalms and liturgical hymns were the epitome of the confluence of eloquence and wisdom that should mark all literature, and stood as an exemplar Anselm attempted to imitate.

With the preceding historical survey serving as the base for fuller treatment of Anselm’s own conceptions of poetry and philosophy, Chapter 3 undergoes a general analysis of Anselm’s entire corpus with the intent of discovering the broad poetic and philosophic dimensions of his thinking, and how they interact. Anselm’s *Orationes* and
Meditationes are analyzed to illustrate his poetic techniques, including intricate exercise of multi-syllabic rhyme, antithesis, paradox, and aphorism, as well as his unprecedented emotional depth displayed in personal private prayer. Likewise, his more philosophical works, including De Grammatico and Monologion, are analyzed to reveal a gifted logician and dialectician dedicated to verbal precision in pursuit of truth. Finally, building especially on the work of Loughlin, the letters of St. Anselm are examined with reference to the rest of his oeuvre in order to reveal an author who purposefully combined poetic and dialectic techniques in all of his writings.

With the poetic and dialectic nature of Anselm’s thought established, Chapter 4 begins a more detailed exegesis of the Proslogion, which attempts to uncover the philosophic and poetic elements of the document and sketch the principles that implicitly lie behind this remarkable doxological mixture of both activities. Building on the recent work of authors such as Overton, the poetics of the Proslogion are revealed through a poetic analysis of its structure and his use of the devices enumerated in the Rhetorica ad Herenniam. It is concluded that, in this work Anselm has created a composition of unparalleled poetic beauty and emotion while simultaneously employing a logical rigour resulting in a truly original philosophical argument that continues to inspire heated dialectic debate. This poetic/dialectic confluence creates a document of surprising unity, and serves as a model for a different mode of theology, both rigorous in argument yet emotionally inspiring, as fits its subject God.

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Chapter 5 turns to an analysis of Anselm’s remarkable conception of language as participation in the very nature of God, as Truth and Beauty. Mapping the categories of Poetry and Philosophy onto this doxological grid of Beauty and Truth provides a uniquely theological conception of language with considerable flexibility. Anselm’s view of Truth as the ultimate end of philosophy, and Beauty as the end of poetry, is based upon a theory of the sign that ultimately views all language utterances as containing elements of both. If language participates in God, the goal of all theological writing must be to be as beautiful and truthful as humanly possible.

Finally, Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion to the current project, and points out the important results of our investigation as well as calling for greater integration of poetic and philosophic elements in theological writing. It is no accident that at least one philosopher writing on Anselm envisions a future “merging of logic and linguistics” as Anselm is an authority on such a conjoining. With particular focus on the Radical Orthodoxy movement, it is argued that Anselm’s example should motivate the new generation of theologians attuned to both the logic and emotion of its subject, resulting in doxological writing that can both convince and inspire. If theology is to continue as a discipline it must embrace its identity as both poetry and philosophy.

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2. ANSELM’S REALM

Like all writers, Anselm did not begin his work in a literary vacuum. Although he contributed a great deal of powerful and original thought, his work was built upon a solid foundation comprised in large part of the Liberal Arts’ trivium tradition of the eleventh century, the orthodox martyr Boethius, his beloved St. Augustine, and a liturgy and hymnology dependent upon the Psalms. To better understand the legacy upon which Anselm drew, one must research the roles of both poetry and philosophy, as well as the relationship between them, in each of his primary sources. Thus, in order to properly establish the nature of the relationship between poetry and philosophy in Anselm’s theology, this section intends to contribute by inquiring into these four sources, which most significantly shaped Anselm’s literature. Each of these sources will be discussed as they pertain to poetry (via poetic analytics), philosophy (via dialectic analytics), and the poetical-dialectical relationship between them, including provisional observations on how each influenced Anselm’s own literary output. It is hoped that, in so doing, major groundwork will have been established that will be expanded upon in the following chapters.
2.1 POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY IN ELEVENTH CENTURY LIBERAL ARTS

In Anselm’s monastic cultural milieu, the fundamental curriculum for education was laid out in the tradition of the Seven Liberal Arts. In fact, his master Lanfranc was renowned in his day for his role in the renewing of the liberal arts, and Anselm himself taught the artes curriculum as Prior (and perhaps Abbot) of Bec. For our subject matter, it is the trivium, the three verbal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic, that is most important. In order to gain insight into how our modern categories of poetry and philosophy fit into the traditional schema, and how they impacted Anselm, the distinction and interrelationship of the trivium arts must first be investigated.

The first element of the trivium, Grammar, was hailed as the foundational linguistic art, as it concerned itself with mastering the building blocks of language, words, and how to structure them properly into sentences. Although in classical times grammar, seen as merely elementary, was often slighted in favour of rhetoric, the Carolingians had reasserted its legitimate primacy as the bedrock upon which the other two arts were built, and thereby paved the way for the academic flourishing which would begin in Anselm’s time. The curriculum consisted primarily of detailed study and mimesis of the classical Latin poets, especially Virgil and Ovid. It was in grammatical studies that one first learnt to navigate the complexities of language, and a great deal of attention was given to the parts of speech and the syntactical relationships between them.

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27 For an enlightening presentation of the entire liberal arts tradition see David L. Wagner, ed., The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages, Reprint Ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).
28 Margaret Gibson, Lanfranc of Bec (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 44-45. Gibson states: “Lanfranc’s strength lay in the artes, in his command of the details of words and sentence-structure. For Guitmund of La Croix-St.-Leofroy […] he was God’s instrument in the renewal of the liberal arts […] Lanfranc was a first-class practitioner throughout the trivium, aware of new developments and ready to promote them.”
The second liberal art, Rhetoric, was the predominant art of the Greek Second Sophistic period, and remained foremost in classical Latin pedagogy as well. The goal of Rhetoric was primarily that of persuasion, a movement of the intellectual and affective faculties of the audience to the end of changing opinion and/or action. For the Romans philosophy itself was seen perfected therein. Cicero outlined three types of rhetorical speech: epideictic (praising or blaming), deliberative (expressing an opinion in debate), and judicial or forensic (presenting in a court of law).\footnote{Martin Camargo, “Rhetoric” in Wagner, \textit{Seven Liberal Arts}, 98.} The art further comprised five parts: invention (the discovery of valid arguments), arrangement (ordering the arguments), style (using the proper language), memory (grasping the matter and words properly), and delivery (how the argument is presented).\footnote{Ibid., 98.} In short, rhetoric was concerned with the creation of linguistic utterances (both oral and written) and as such was intrinsic to any authorial endeavour. By the eleventh century, rhetoric had been in decline as grammar had become the primary focus of the Carolingian period and usurped much of the compositional nature of the art. Likewise, what had at one time become the greatest aspect of rhetoric, \textit{invention} - the discovery of valid argumentation - was largely subsumed into the rapidly growing discipline of dialectic. As such, despite Augustine’s ideal of a Christian Rhetoric, by Anselm’s age, rhetoric had become largely reduced to one of its constituent parts, \textit{elocutio}, the aspect of style. That is, rhetoric had become chiefly associated with verbal ornamentation as areas it once incorporated migrated to either grammar (via the \textit{ars dictaminis}) or dialectic.\footnote{Charles Sears Baldwin, \textit{Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400 )}(New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 142.}
The final art of the *trivium* was Dialectic, sometimes called Logic, and concerned itself primarily with the practice of critical thinking. In Anselm’s time, the works of Aristotle were just being recovered, and the chief sources for dialectic were Aristotle’s early works, namely the *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, translated into Latin and commented upon by Boethius. In addition, Cicero’s distillation of Aristotle’s *Topics*, as commented on by Boethius, was also a common dialectic text. Dialectic analyzed the force of argument, dissecting objects and statements into their respective categories, and the use of syllogisms and enthymemes was characteristic of its language. Although neglected for over half a millennia, in the eleventh century dialectic was quickly gaining adherents and was to become the dominant force of the scholastic period. Thus, our monk belongs to the age when the shift of emphasis in the liberal arts towards favouring dialectic took place. Lanfranc, Anselm’s personal mentor, was renowned for his grasp of dialectic, and his application of Aristotelian logic to his debate over the actual presence of Christ in the Eucharist would prove to be foundational for the direction which theology would head in the coming centuries.

Having created a cursory sketch of the *trivium* as it stood in Anselm’s day, we must attempt to understand how this educational curriculum relates to the categories of philosophy and poetry with which we have concerned ourselves. This outline is necessarily brief and, as will become evident, in no way presents the degree to which various authorities disagreed on the contents of each art, nor more importantly, the extent of substantial overlap that occurred in the penumbra between these three classical divisions.

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32 Ibid., 151.
2.1.1 Poetic Analytics

Medieval Poetics was intimately associated with both Grammar and Rhetoric. Shortly after Anselm’s death, there was a proliferation of school manuals dealing with the *ars poetria*, marking what has been called the Twelfth-Century Renaissance in humanistic learning, including poetry. These poetic manuals, and the accompanying proliferation of Latin poetry, were the product of a poetic revival that was already in process. Waddell says of Anselm’s age: “it is towards the end of the eleventh century that one recognizes the beginning of the craze for verse, which is almost universal in the twelfth.” Thus, Anselm lived at a time marked by a rebirth of poetry, including advancements in rhythmic poetry and prose, with their heavy use of accent and rhyme. As *poetria* began to assert itself as independent again, it combined elements of the study and practice of grammar and rhetoric, including elements of the monastic preoccupation on the *ars dictamen* (“art of letter-writing”). It is in these three elements which Anselm’s poetic study and practice are best understood. Consequently, the connection between poetry and grammar, rhetoric, and the *ars dictamen* in the eleventh century will be discussed in turn, followed by an investigation of some eleventh-century Latin poetry itself.

Grammar was an important subject at the Abbey of Bec, in Normandy, where Anselm’s academic career flourished. Poetry was a basic part of grammatical training, and in many ways it can be said that “the universal study of grammar […] concerned

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33 J. S. P. Tatlock, “The Middle Ages—Romantic or Rationalistic?” *Speculum* 8.3 (July 1933): 302, “The study of poetry came, very suggestively, under the head of Grammar and Rhetoric.”
35 Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric*, 195
itself […] chiefly with poetry.” Anselm was influenced by many of the leading grammarians, who had caused Grammar to rise to ascendancy in the liberal arts during the Carolingian period. Priscian remained the dominant authority on Grammar, and the catalogue at Bec includes two parts of his famous Institutiones grammaticae, the VIII partibus and De Constructionibus, as its Grammar textbook. Other Grammarians most likely studied extensively in Anselm’s formative period included Apuleius, Donatus, Cassiodorus and Isidore. Each of these authorities spent considerable time, usually later in their grammars, discussing metrics and poetry. Likewise, the Venerable Bede was responsible for an important work on the Ars Metrica as well as some poetry. Anselm is aware of at least some of Bede’s work, even requesting copies (Epist. 42). Not only did Bede write on the art of poetic metrics, he also produced a classic study of poetic techniques in De schematibus et tropis. Later still, the Carolingian master Alcuin was known to write poetry, which marked a return to classical metre. Many of his students also composed poetry in the manner of the quantitative metrca found in the classics, but this tradition was already replaced again by the rhyming accentual rithmica during the time of Anselm’s education.

The first art of the trivium in the eleventh century was a discipline grounded in both the reading and imitation of classical poetical works in Latin, including especially

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37 Gustavus Becker, Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui (Bonn: Cohen et Filium, 1885), 266.
38 Henry, Logic, 8.
41 Bede, De schematibus et tropis (Migne, PL XC, 178). De schematibus et tropis is an important document in relation to the Psalnic material discussed in 2.4.1, as Bede discusses the relationship between the poetic figures of speech and Biblical literature, drawing heavily on the Psalms.
Virgil, Ovid, and Horace, among numerous others such as Flaccus, Commodion, Martial, and Juvenal. Such poets, according to Isidore can be divided into three types: lyric poets, tragedians, and writers of comedies. All three types of poets would be a part of grammatical studies for Anselm. Cassiodorus’ authoritative definition shows poetry as central to Grammar in the Middle Ages: “Grammar is skill in the art of cultivated speech – skill acquired from famous writers of poetry and of prose; its function is the creation of faultless prose and verse; its end is to please through skill in finished speech and blameless writing.” The student was expected to acquire skill from reading the classic poets and be able to create their own finished and blameless linguistic creations.

Thus, Anselm was certainly exposed to accomplished Latin poets during his grammatical education, including grammatical exercises in both the analysis and composition of verse, which every medieval grammar student was required to undertake. The most famous of these exercises was the *ennaratio poetarum*, or “exposition of the poets.” This activity was based upon a close reading of the aforementioned *auctores* who had come before, interpreting the meaning of the literature, as well as analyzing their poetic techniques. Hermeneutics and composition were thus both taught via Grammar, by rigorously working through the classic poets themselves, as well as the Church Fathers and Scripture.

An important aspect of *ennaratio poetarum* was the distinguishing of *schemata* and *tropis* they utilized. *Schemata* are “figures of speech” which Isidore says are “for the

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sake of ornamenting speech,” giving the following list as examples: 
prolepsis, zeugma, 
hypozeuxis, syllepsis, anadiplosis, anaphora, epanaphora, epizeuxis, epanalepsis, 
paronomasia, alliteration, homoeoptoton, homoeoteleuton, hirmos, polysyndeton, 
asyndeton, and hypallage. After discussing each schema he then introduces de tropis which he calls “modes of speech,” again including a list and explanation for examples: 
metaphora, catachresis, metalepsis, metonymia, antonomasia, epitheton, synecdoche, 
onomatopoeia, hyperbaton, transcensio, anastrophe, hysteron proteron, parenthesis, 
tnesis, synthesis, hyperbole, allegory, irony, antiphrasis, aenigma, charientismos, 
astysmos, similitudo, imago, paradigm. He follows these extensive lists with a 
discussion of prose (de prosa) and meters (de metris). Prose is simply described as “an 
extended discourse, unconstrained by rules of meter.” Meters on the other hand “are 
bounded by the fixed measures (mensura) and intervals of feet, and they do not proceed 
beyond the designated dimension of time.” He also lists the different types of meters, 
hexameter, pentameter, trimeter, Anacreontic, Sapphic, Archilochian, Colophonian, 
Sotadean, Simonidian, Asclepiadian, heroic, elegiac, pastoral, hymns, epithalamiums, 
laments, epitaph, and epigram. Most of these figures and tropes were gathered by 
Isidore from Grammatical authorities, including Book 3 of Donatus’ Ars Maior. Here, in 
a small amount of space, the whole of poetics is summarized and categorized as part of 
medieval grammatical training. In short, due to the unprecedented dissemination of his 
Etymologies, Isidore ensures that, in the Middle Ages, Grammar was a subject steeped in 
poetry.

44 Isidore, Etymologies, I.xxxvi.1-18. 
46 Ibid., I.xxxviii.1. 
47 Ibid., I.xxxix.1 
48 Ibid., I.xxxix.5-25.
Since the above lists from Isidore can be considered a part of poetics, it is clear that Anselm received specific instruction in poetic analysis and composition. Although we cannot be certain of the exact extent of the education in grammar that Anselm received, the fact that he was a skilled grammarian, intimately familiar with the discipline as it stood in the eleventh century, is attested in his work *De Grammatico*. That Anselm saw the importance of grammatical studies is shown in his directions to a young monk to work assiduously on his declensions, and pay special attention to the writings of Virgil (which incidentally he had not taught himself due to its obscenity). Thus, Anselm found Grammar foundational, but somewhat beneath his skills to teach, as he makes clear in a letter to his beloved Maurice:

I have heard you are attending lectures given by Dom Arnulf. If this is true, it pleases me, for I have always desired your progress, as you yourself know from experience, and at no time more than now. I have also heard that he is excellent in grammar, and you know that teaching the boys grammar has always been a burden to me, and I know that for this reason you made less progress in your knowledge of grammar than you should have. I exhort and pray you, therefore, and I order you as a dearly beloved son, to attend as many of his lectures as possible and endeavor very diligently to learn everything else you can. [...] As far as possible, I wish you to strive as hard as you can and him to teach you chiefly about Virgil and other authors on whom you were not lectured by me, except those in which something indecent is found (*Epist.* 64). 49

We see here the great importance Anselm attaches to proper understanding of Grammar and the vital role the great Latin poet Virgil played in proper pedagogical formation.

Furthermore, the stress on Virgil in particular indicates that Anselm felt that knowledge

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of poetry was indispensable to a young monk. Although he hadn’t taught on the poet Virgil, he saw such an education important, and regretted his educational omission.

Yet Anselm’s own assessment of his pedagogical skills in Grammar may be overly critical, as evidenced in an earlier request from the monk Avesgotus to have his privileged nephew taught by Anselm. The letter is helpful in highlighting Anselm’s considerable grammatical skill:

I have a certain nephew, already a young man, for whom I care above all else; and if you can bear it I would like him to stay with you to be trained in grammar by you. I can send him to other scholars but I have more faith in you than in any other living person. [...] Why does the fame of Lanfranc and Wimund fly through the world more than yours? Why do you hide your light under a bushel for so long? Do you not recall that the poet said, “All you know is nothing unless someone else knows you know it (Epist. 19)”?

What becomes clear in this request for tutelage is the level of grammatical knowledge that Anselm must have possessed (“more than any other living person”), especially in the fact that Avesgotus expected Anselm to identify “the poet” he quoted - the ancient Roman author Persius Flaccus - without trouble. Avesgotus trusted Anselm would immediately recognize his quotation from this Classical poetic source because he knew the level of Anselm’s grounding in Grammar. This expectation of recognition was fulfilled when, in his reply, Anselm explicitly names the poet cited and explains that the passage in question was meant to discourage vanity not encourage it (Epist. 20). In that same reply, Anselm explains that although he did at one time teach Grammar, he is now unable, nor inclined, to do so any longer. But his reputation as a Grammarian was considerably distinguished, and such a reputation would only be existent if Anselm showed acumen in poetry.

50 Anselm states: “For I have neither the freedom of choice now nor the inclination nor the opportunity as was once the case, or as your sanctity believes it still to be, for the kind of study from which your beloved [nephew], about whom you wrote, could benefit (Epist. 20).”
Perhaps more informatively, Anselm demonstrates this classical background by quoting the *Ars Poetica* by the poet Horace in his letter to Archbishop Lanfranc (*Epist. 57*). Such a display of intimate knowledge of this ancient work indicates that Anselm had a significant knowledge of poetics. As the *Ars Poetica* is dedicated to teaching the skills, attitudes, and actions of a successful poet, there is no doubt that Anselm was not only exposed to the greatest Latin poetry, but that he also understood how such poetry was to be composed. Not only would he understand how such poetry was composed, he would have been required to compose his own verse as part of his grammatical exercises. These exercises would have been part of his childhood in Northern Italy, and they would have continued into his initiation under the master Lanfranc, Prior at Bec. Such grammatical exercises in *imitatio* did not go to waste, as Anselm proved to be a much better poet than most of the monks studying contemporaneously.

Rhetoric was the other art most commonly associated with Poetics. Isidore defines Rhetoric as “the art of speaking well in civil cases, an eloquence [*eloquentia*] is fluency [*copia*] for the purpose of persuading people toward the just and good.” Together, Rhetoric and Grammar would comprise a formal theoretical and practical education in poetry during the monastic humanism movement of the eleventh-century. Speaking of poetry and rhetoric, Baldwin advises that “they are most fruitful studied side by side.

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51 Horace, “*Ars Poetica,*” trans. Leon Golden in *Horace for Students of Literature: The ‘Ars Poetica’ and Its Tradition* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1995). 19-21. The quote is “*et fortasse cupressum scis simulare.*” Interestingly, a letter from Lanfranc to his nephew Lanfranc and his companion Wido is found amongst the letters of Anselm (*Epist. 31*), in which the Archbishop quotes from Horace *Ep LVIII.82*. Anselm’s subtle allusion to Horace in his letter to Lanfranc undoubtedly presupposed that his master would be sufficiently versed in Horace’s works to pick up on it.

52 Isidore, II.i.1.
Each illuminates the other because their relations are always significant historically."\(^{53}\) By Anselm’s day *poetria* had become “the use of ornament and dilation; the study of style and decoration.”\(^{54}\) Style was a formal element of the Rhetorical curriculum, and indispensable to poetic achievement. Judging by the number of times Baldwin refers to “the confusion of poetic with rhetoric”\(^{55}\) in his classic study *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic*, it becomes clear that some of what we refer to as poetry today would have come under the umbrella of rhetoric in the early eleventh century. *Poetria* was conceived largely as an art of decoration and was actually ascending as a recognized art at the same time as dialectic (at the expense of rhetoric).\(^{56}\) During the Carolingian period Grammar had absorbed much of the adjacent study of Rhetoric.\(^ {57}\) Yet Rhetoric remained part of the liberal arts and was still a separate discipline. It was definitely taught in the monastic schools, with the cathedral schools of Northern France, especially Chartres, making it the prime objective of their educational endeavours.

If Grammar claimed Horace’s aforementioned *Ars poetica*, three rhetorical texts proved to be important influences on the poetic theory of the Middle Ages: the Pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero’s *De inventione*, and Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*.\(^ {58}\) Independent commentaries on the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* were beginning to appear in South Germany and Italy by 1030-1040,\(^ {59}\) yet it appears Lanfranc was commenting on it and Cicero’s *De inventione* long before

\(^{53}\) Baldwin, xiii.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 195.  
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 40.  
\(^{58}\) Schultz, Classical Rhetoric, 2.  
\(^{59}\) Gibson, *Lanfranc*, 49.
Manegold, called *modernorum magister magistorum*, created the first surviving commentaries on them. Since Anselm was Lanfranc’s chief disciple, he was mostly likely also exposed to the classic text, which was thought to be written by Cicero, the greatest of orators. The work had a tremendous influence on medieval rhetoric, especially Book IV with its extensive list of “Figures of Speech” and nineteen “Figures of Thought.” This detailed list with examples of figures became known as “the flowers of rhetoric” (*flores rhetorica*), and any student who could truly use them would be significantly grounded in poetic technique.

Rhetoric was given legitimacy in the monastic schools ever since Cassiodorus had argued in his *Expositio in Psalterium* that Church Fathers such Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and Hilary had studied the figures of rhetoric. Divine eloquence was “succinct with definitions, adorned with figures, marked by the propriety of words, expedited by the constructions of syllogisms.” As a result of such an endorsement and their gaining popularity, the *ars poetria* manuals of the twelfth century would depend heavily upon these figures. Many other lists of such rhetorical devices would be

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61 Caplan, *Rhetorica*, IV. The forty-five figures of speech are listed as:
64 Cassiodorus, *Expositio in Psalterium*, Praefatio XV; PL 70, 19.
available to Anselm in his studies, including mnemonic poems designed to help the student remember them all.

As we shall see in the following chapter, Anselm certainly demonstrates proficiency with these rhetorical figures in his *Orationes* and elsewhere. This proficiency was most likely aided by the completion of the traditional rhetorical exercises known as *progymnasta*\(^{65}\) and *declamationes*.\(^{66}\) The progymnasta were a set of fourteen exercises focused on the skills needed to produce a speech. The declamations were the actual oral delivery of deliberative or judicial orations for an audience. Both were based in the practice of imitation, which helped students gain skill by marking and copying texts which would add to their own repertoire of language tools. Two other rhetorical exercises, amplification and variation, forced students to learn to edit, expand and build off of the best authors Latin had on offer. Thus, through the study of rhetoric a monk such as Anselm would be equipped with the tools and materials necessary to both understand and create poetry.

The eleventh century also saw a significant development in the practice of composition with the rise of the *ars dictaminis*. Ancient Rome had been a culture in which the public orator had become the apogee of language use. However, with the decline of the centralized empire, the public use of Latin in speech gradually dwindled, and the most common use for Latin became literary. As the general populace spoke in their vernacular, scholars focused on Grammar in order to preserve an understanding of Latin. The composition of treatises and poems in Latin continued, but in many ways


letter-writing became the most important focus for writers. Letters were not an easy
eavour to undertake given the technical logistics involved in writing in that era, and,
as a result, copies of letters sent and received were often gathered into collections. To
facilitate this newfound demand, treatises on epistolary rhetoric began to appear. These
treatises combined elements of Grammar and Rhetoric in order to equip the student with
all the knowledge and skills required to compose the perfect letter.

The earliest standard letter-writing handbook was written by the older
contemporary of Anselm, Cardinal Alberic of Monte Cassino. Many of his letters are
found in the works of St. Peter Damian. His treatise *Breviarium de dictamine* was
composed around 1075 and illustrates the fact that dictamen had become a major
category for the erudite of the eleventh century. By the twelfth century, manuals on
letter-writing proliferated, demonstrating that the art was gaining in strength during
Anselm’s lifetime. In fact, Anselm himself will use the term *dictamen* and its cognates
much more regularly than either *poetria*, *versus*, or *rhetorica*, indicating that his
conception of language was heavily influenced by this developing art. Furthermore, the
art of letter-writing was practiced meticulously by Anselm, as he compiled and organized
his own body of letters until his death. Letter-writing and the writing of verse were
closely linked, with the verb *dictare* meaning either “to write according to dictation” or
“to write poetry.” The standards of *dictamen* were provided by the various rhetorical
and grammatical manuals available in the period.

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67 Peter Damian, *Opera Omnia*, (Patrologia Latina, CXLV, 621-634). M. Sitzmann and T. Coffey,
198-227.

Anselm usually adheres to commonly accepted stipulations for epistolary style and content, repeatedly apologizing to a recipient for his contravening of letter-writing etiquette by exceeding what he considers appropriate length. For example, in his letter to the novice Lanzo he states, “But since I have already overstepped the brevity demanded by a letter […] this following short exhortation will bring our letter to an end” (Epist. 37).\(^{69}\) Anselm, then, is here shown to be very conscious of his position as a writer of letters. Since dictamen is linked to oral dictation, it can be translated as ‘writing’ because the common practice for composing a letter, poem or treatise was for the author to dictate content to a scribe who wrote it onto vellum. Anselm himself refers to composition as dictating, saying “if I told you how many things had prevented me from dictating, anybody who does not know my way of life could not believe it (Letter 100).”

Baldwin describes how dictamen was usually divided into three different types: 1) *metricum*, the ancient quantitative verse still taught as a branch of grammatical, 2) *rithmicum*, the accentual rimed verse of the hymns, and 3) *prosaicum*, free composition (*sermo communis*, or *solutus*), which the manuals equate with letter-writing (*prosaicum vel epistolare*).\(^{70}\) In other words, the manuals taught different types of writing: the quantitative metrics of classical poetry, the rhymed accentual verse that was gaining ascendancy during the Middle Ages, and prose, freed from the strict rules of either syllable quantity or accent. It must be noted that today the term *prosa* might be misunderstood to mean language that is devoid of poetic devices such as rhyme. However, Baldwin points out that “Abbo of Fleury, uses alliteration, and sometimes

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\(^{69}\) Anselm’s letters are referenced according to their place in Frohlich’s translation cited above.

\(^{70}\) Baldwin, 214.
The use of rhyme, in fact, was common in medieval letter-writing, indicating that much of what was called prose in Anselm’s day may be classified as poetry in modern analyses. Thus the difference between *rithmicum* and *prosaicum* is much harder to delineate than the difference between either and metric poetry. This is largely due to the fact that writers of Latin prose were expected to make their epistles as poetic as possible:

Since, therefore, poetry was to such a large extent the subject of study, especially in the *ludi grammatici*, the language not only of the school exercise but of prose generally tended more and more to become poetic; ordinary language was tabooed, and its place was taken by a prose which was adorned with all the artifices of poetry. And not only was the style of prose made poetic, but the matter, which in the best period had belonged to the province of poetry, found treatment in prose, especially descriptions – descriptions of objects of nature, objects of art, the seasons, places, persons, animals, and birds, and panegyrics of great men and praises of their deeds.\(^\text{72}\)

Such poetic prose was the hallmark of a gifted writer, and had become expected in the epistolary exchanges of Anselm’s day. Besides the direct, clear style used for important matters, Latin had developed a taste for writers whose “sentences are involved, full of far-fetched figures and learned references, and marked by repetitions, antitheses, alliteration, jingles.”\(^\text{73}\) Yet the most important stand-out in the development of Latin style was rhyme, characteristic of both prose and new poetic experiments.\(^\text{74}\)

There is much debate about the origin of rhyme in Latin poetry. Some argued it was introduced from Arabic sources, or brought down from Ireland with the monastic missionaries. Yet, it can be found in classical Latin verse, as proved by Virgil’s use of

\(^{71}\) Baldwin, 144.
\(^{72}\) Ogle, “Mediaeval Latin Style,” 176.
\(^{73}\) Ibid., 170.
\(^{74}\) Baldwin, 254, “That rime of clause with clause was avoided as a vice even in classical Latin is an exaggeration of Renaissance scrupulosity. The middle age, following rather Augustine and the tradition of the schools of Gaul, found rime desirable, and often sought it to mark parallel or contrast.”
end rhymes. Although Raby and Curtius largely dismiss the use of rhyme in the classics, centering their attention on rhyme in prose, Guggenheimer demonstrates that rhyme in classical writers did exist more substantially than is often credited. As such, the classic literature would have still informed the poets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Still, Raby shows that Latin prose had been characterized chiefly by parallelism of form, which marked the end of the clause. This was later joined by rhyme in writers like Cicero, Apuleius, Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. Furthermore, the greatest scholar of the Western Church Fathers, Jerome, describes homoeoteleuten, similar-sounding endings, in his commentary on Isaiah. Raby argues the earliest Christian hymn-writers used rhyme infrequently, and usually only a single rhyme, while double-rhymes appeared sporadically in the rhetorical prose of the fathers. Thus, although known and used occasionally, rhyme was not a regular aspect of Latin poetry until the eleventh century. Anselm lived in an era where rhyme was rising, influenced by an Irish and Anglo-Saxon predilection for harmonious endings, and establishing itself as a chief vehicle for poetic expression, chiefly through the hymnody (see 2.4).

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77 Francis John Balnaves, “Bernard of Morlaix: the literature of complaint, the Latin tradition and the twelfth-century ‘renaissance’” (PhD Diss., Australian National University, 1997): 274.
79 Ibid., 23.
81 Raby, 24-25.
82 Ibid., 22, “Rime or assonance, used frequently as an occasional ornament, was seldom, until the eleventh century, applied to the whole of a poem.”
Amongst Anselm’s contemporaries we find more than a few able poets working in the new accentual rhythmic verse with rhyme, including Fulbert of Chartres, Wipo, Marbodius, Peter Damian and Hildebert. The latter would become known as one of the finest poets of the Middle Ages, often referred to as *egregious versificator*. Interestingly, this same Hildebert, master of double-rhymes, wrote two letters to Anselm. In the second of these letters, the master poet praised Anselm’s abilities as a writer saying: “Amazement often comes over me when I think of them and, marveling that a man of our time can produce such things, I admit that everything is written by the pen of a scribe who writes swiftly (Ps. 44:2), saying with the psalmist, *this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes* (Ps. 117:23) (Letter 240).” Hildebert, the man whom Dronke, Raby, Brittain and others praise for poetic ingenuity, speaks of a similar ability in Anselm.

Anselm’s reply to Hildebert’s letters is particularly important as it is composed poetically, characterized by splendid rhymes. The exchange of correspondence between two leading literary figures is instructive as it places Anselm amongst the foremost poets

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88 F. Brittain, *The Medieval Latin and Romance Lyric to A.D. 1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951). Brittain states: “Before the eleventh century ended, rhyme reached perfection outside the sphere of the Sequence. In the poems of Hildebert of Lavardin, who died in 1133, we find that accentual Latin verse, after a long struggle, has at length reached its destined triple goal of perfect rhythm, regular caesura, and symmetrically placed double rhymes extending through a whole poem.” Cf. F. J. E. Raby, *Secular Latin Poetry*, Vol. II, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 269. Raby points out that “Hildebert was recognized as the first man of letters of his age.” Raby will say of one of Hildebert’s poems that “it becomes an inspired lyric which ranks as one of the few masterful pieces of the mystical verse of the Middle Ages.”
89 Frohlich, II.1.218.
of his day, and his writing skill shines out as equal, if not superior. It is not hard to see that Anselm served as an inspiration for his younger contemporary’s poetic journey. This becomes especially apparent when one remembers that Reginald of Canterbury was another poet who had taken inspiration from Anselm. Reginald was a friend of Hildebert and the latter admired his poetry, yet Reginald was clearly influenced by Anselm, and he even dedicates poems to Anselm while the Archbishop was in exile.90

The above highlights the fact that Anselm lived during a period of poetic revival that continued after his death. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw a blossoming of manuals dealing with the *ars poetria*, including Matthew de Vendome’s *Ars Versificatoria* (before 1175), Geoffroi de Vinsauf’s *Poetria Nova* (c. 1210), Evrard’s *Laborintus* (c. 1213), and, later, Johannes de Garlandia’s *Poetria* (probably before mid-thirteenth century).91 In each of these works, there is a considerable interest in the continued growth of the use of rhyme, a favourite device of Anselm, as well as the importance of the art of letter-writing. These new poetry manuals borrowed heavily from both Grammar and Rhetoric, focusing on the aspect of style, especially the figures of speech and thought.92

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91 For a breakdown of the substance of these works see Baldwin, 185-196.
92 Douglas Kelly, “The Scope of the Treatment of Composition in the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Arts of Poetry,” *Speculum* 41.2 (April 1966): 277-278. Concerning the relationship of the new *Ars poetria* and the arts of Grammar and Rhetoric, Kelly states: “In conclusion, it would be well by way of clarification to insist again upon the fact that the classification of the twelfth- and thirteenth-century arts of poetry under the heading of grammar or rhetoric based on their treatment of composition does not imply a hard and fast line dividing instruction in composition in the two arts. All the arts of poetry concentrate on ornamentation by means of the figures and an elevated style. Hesitation as to which art these figures should be assigned is already apparent in antiquity, and there is still disagreement in the Middle Ages as to whether the study and writing of poetry belongs properly to grammar or rhetoric; moreover, poetry did have a certain status as an art in its own right, though not enough to usurp a place among the established seven liberal arts.”
Given the growing fascination with poetry in the eleventh-century it is surprising how little regarded the poetry of this period is. Growing from the Renaissance’s distaste for the Medieval, modern assessments of eleventh-century poetry are often dismissive, as illustrated by the fact that Anselm’s name is never amongst those of the poets. Typical is the influential pronouncement of Curtius:

Medieval poetry was far too lacking in independence to give a living development to the topos which it had received from pagan late antiquity. The Christian poet knows, of course, that nature was created by God. He can therefore address its component parts as creatures of God or of Christ. [...] The medieval poet does not invoke nature, he enumerates its component parts, and does so according to the principle, “The more the better!”93

Curtius is citing two weaknesses often attributed to medieval Latin poetry, a lack of originality or “independence”, and a lack of appreciation of nature as nature. Dronke rightly points out that even the example Curtius cites as proof of “lacking in independence” cannot be so judged.94 In fact, Dronke declares there are numerous examples of “Poetic Individuality” in Medieval Poetry.95 Ziolkowki takes it further arguing that “it is false to establish a dichotomy between individuality and imitation: The opposition is neither intrinsic nor automatic.”96 The fact that Medieval authors regularly imitated previous authors does not de facto render their poetry banal. Yet Tatlock will echo Curtius’ evaluation of Medieval Poetry stating: “The Middle Ages are not remarkable for lyric poetry; and what is most characteristic about it is its strict forms.”97 Likewise Sedgwick argues: “The new school, treating matter which could be of no real

95 Ibid.
97 Tatlock, 300
interest to the writer, concentrated its attention on the form: what it lacked in power and sincerity it tried to supply by superior smoothness and technical ingenuity.”

It is true that many of the monastic schools produced a large body of school-exercise poetry derived chiefly from copying the classics. Moreover, there is a general emphasis on form in the liberal arts’ poetic theory, resulting in a substantial body of poetry that is overly florid, turbid, and rigid. Yet this description cannot be applied to the whole of the eleventh century, especially the best work of Fulbert, Hildebert, Peter Damian, or Anselm. An emphasis on the ornamental aspect of poetic language in no way validates the conclusion: “There was little freedom for the individual, stimulus to inventiveness, scope for self-expression.”

Neither does the medieval penchant for humility always indicate a “disinclination to attach value to one’s own private feelings.”

Tatlock is closer to the truth in recognizing the emotionalism of eleventh century poetry as expressed in prayerful devotion to Mary. This romantic element developed in eleventh century poetry, especially in the composition of prayers intended for private personal devotion. Anselm, Peter Damian, and John of Fecamp stand out as particular innovators in this area, composing orationes which built upon the practice of preces privatae, where nobility and laymen utilized pre-prepared prayers, similar to the Psalter.

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100 Tatlock, 302.
101 Ibid., 301.
102 Ibid., 302.
This new private devotional movement created surprisingly original insight into the personal psychology of the period. The introspective insight and emotional power found in this developing genre is often observed in the works of Anselm’s younger contemporary Abelard, but by no means does it begin with him. Not only does the eleventh century see a rebirth of poetry in the development of rhyme, it also witnesses the birth of a personal emotional perspective that will influence the development of poetry both secular and sacred, in Latin and vernacular.

The second major criticism of medieval Latin literature regards the use of nature in poetry. Damon points out that the earlier Carolingian style of poetry neglected the value of nature itself, in favour of its usefulness of articulating particular ideas. He states: “Their use of imagery was not based on its decorative appeal but on its symbolic or illustrative relation to the concepts informing their poetry. [...] In brief, Carolingian imagery is functional rather than decorative, oriented toward concepts which condition and proportion it.”

The charge is simple: “Their use of imagery was not based on its decorative appeal but on its symbolic or illustrative relation to the concepts informing their poetry.” However, if the Carolingians enacted a “subordination of imagery to concept” because “the images are concise and austere”, the same may not be said for Anselm himself. His poetry was not “functional rather than decorative, oriented toward concepts

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105 Ibid., 517.
106 Ibid., 517.
107 Ibid., 517.
which condition and proportion it.”\textsuperscript{108} Instead, he will use vivid imagery that rouses the emotions of his audience, in one case his prayer to a piece of the cross will give that physical object a life unto itself (\textit{Prayer to the Holy Cross}). Damon points out that the Goliards later demonstrated “a positive effort to include the maximum amount of natural detail and to introduce and juxtapose images in a causal, impressionistic manner.”\textsuperscript{109} Anselm demonstrated a use of imagery that likewise departed from the Carolingian austerity, in a way similar to this later poetic movement. After analyzing his poetry, it may be said of Anselm, as Damon says of Thomas Aquinas, that, for him, “the objects of nature possess an inherent value and significance, qualities which man can understand and appreciate only through attention to the objects themselves.”\textsuperscript{110}

To conclude this section, St. Anselm found himself situated in a monastic culture that relied upon a liberal arts curriculum that emphasized the Poetic. As a master of Grammar, exposed to Rhetoric and the ascending \textit{ars dictami} and \textit{ars poetria}, Anselm found at his disposal all he needed to compose poetry that would partake in the newly found stress on rhyme and vivid imagery. In short, his cultural and educational background supplied him with the tools necessary to create a new type of poetic creation, and the greatest poets of his day attested to the fact that Anselm was indeed a master of the poetic.

\subsection*{2.1.2 Dialectic Analytics}

In the eleventh century monastic curriculum, the term \textit{philosophia} usually referred to the works of classical philosophers including the Greek pre-Socratics, Plato,
Aristotle, and schools of thought such as the Epicureans, Cynics and Stoics. The writings of these philosophers themselves were often largely inaccessible, except for some of the works of Aristotle translated by Boethius or paraphrased by Cicero, and fragments of Plato’s *Timaeus*, which could be found scattered across various European monasteries. The Stoic Seneca also had some presence in medieval libraries. Exposure to philosophy was more readily available through citations in the Church Fathers, Latin classical writers, or through the encyclopedists such as Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus, Isidore, Bede and Alcuin.

As a separate and distinct subject however, in Anselm’s day and age, “Philosophy has disappeared, but the dream or echo of it lived on in discussions from Augustine to Alcuin about how the phantom subject was to be divided.” Yet Isidore does not ignore the bi-partite division either, explaining that Aristotle divides philosophy into speculative and practical (moral, economic, civil) while also outlining a

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number of different types of philosophy such as Natural and Divine, doctrinal and the mathematical breakdown of arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy.

Anselm would have also been exposed to Alcuin’s famous discussions of *philosophia* and the liberal arts. Alcuin’s *De Dialectica* was based largely upon Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, which was based in turn on Cassiodorus’ *Institutiones*. However, although Isidore didn’t alter his source material significantly, Alcuin alters Isidore and Cassiodorus’ presentation on philosophy in several ways, including integrating insight from Pseudo-Augustine’s *Categoriae Decem*. Tetsuro Shimizu demonstrates that Alcuin presented the Liberal Arts as an embodiment of philosophy, so that “students should make their way through the seven arts as parts of philosophy in order to reach the realm of true philosophy.” Grammar was seen as a foundational pre-philosophic art, dialectic was the initial art of philosophy, while rhetoric was combined with ethics before moving on to the quadrivium of mathematical arts. These changes are gleaned from the introduction to Alcuin’s *De Grammatica* called ‘Disputatio de vera philosophia’ in one manuscript, as well as another work, *Dialogus de rhetorica et virtutibus*:

Alcuin also seems to have changed the order of the *trivium* and to have put dialectic before rhetoric, for grammar, rhetoric and dialectic is the order according to Isidore and Cassiodorus. These facts suggest that Alcuin intended to add moral philosophy between the rhetoric, which is the last part of the *trivium*, and the *quadrivium* [...] . As a result, his system presumably is composed of a preliminary discipline (grammar); two disciplines of *logica* (dialectic and rhetoric); a discipline of *ethica*, which is again composed of four parts (the four virtues); and the *quadrivium*, which he ascribes to *physica* (PL 101, 952B-C). Thus, in the Carolingian curriculum, after working through the *trivium*, ethics, and quadrivium, the student is ready to move on to *vera philosophia* - from the study of

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113 Ibid., 25.
114 Ibid., 25.
visible objects to practical and speculative theology. This emphasis on true philosophy as Christian theology had a historic connection to the use of the term in monasticism since its inception in the fourth century through authors such as Origen, Augustine, and St. Benedict. For the Christian monk, his “philosophy” was his chosen way of life.

Although not emphasizing a study of *philosophia* per se, as inheritors of Alcuin’s educational reforms, the eleventh century monastic schools did prepare their students in philosophical subjects through their emphasis on the Liberal Arts at the service of Christian teaching. Furthermore, the popularity of Cassiodorus and Isidore was still quite strong, and philosophy as a distinct discipline was therefore still presented in their discussion of its possible divisions and subject matter, though ultimately subservient to Christian doctrine. In this light, a discussion of all three arts of the *trivium* will provide significant insight into the philosophical climate of Anselm’s milieu.

Grammar was the most important discipline in the *trivium* to Alcuin and the rest of the Carolingian schoolmasters whose influence was still strong in the eleventh century. The reason for its primacy was the simple fact that Grammar was the first step in the journey to ‘true philosophy.’ If Grammar was not properly instilled in the student, there would be no hope for understanding the elements that built upon it. In this sense, Grammar is a part of every later art in the liberal monastic education. Philosophy must thus always take into careful consideration the lessons of grammar. As Anselm himself testifies in his *De Grammatico*, many intellectual quandaries are rectified by paying attention to the ambiguities of language, both semantically and syntactically. By giving due consideration to grammatical constructions, the philosopher is enabled to proceed cautiously with his or her propositions, confident of their validity.
The attention to the syntax and grammatical precision realized in the works of Donatus and Priscian would provide Anselm with the analytical tools he would need in constructing his rigorous arguments. Likewise the sweeping introduction provided by the grammatical encyclopedias of Cassidorious, Isidore, and Alcuin to philosophy - from the natural philosophy of the zoology and medicine, to the philosophy of language exhibited in the Church Fathers –furnished Anselm with a very broad philosophical introduction that he could draw upon to undergird his argumentation that perfected the newer dialectic of Aristotle. As discussed previously, Anselm was considered a foremost grammarian by his contemporaries, and thus grammar was certainly a first stop on his route to ‘true philosophy.’

Although less obvious, we cannot forget that Rhetoric is also indispensable to philosophy, especially invention, the art of formulating a persuasive argument. In this regard, the insightful observation by Ralph McInerny is especially apt: “I now draw your attention to an astonishing fact. When philosophers speak of what philosophers do they almost never mention writing.”¹¹⁵ Yet, a philosopher must ultimately partake in literary composition in order to share thoughts with others, an important observation when dealing with the question of how philosophic enquiry relates to poetics. As such, Cicero will argue that “rhetoric should be subordinate to philosophy.”¹¹⁶ This idea that rhetoric was subservient to philosophy, led Alcuin, as noted earlier, to align the seven liberal arts with the threefold division of logic, ethics, and physics. Plato, had already broken up logic into two parts, dialectic and rhetoric, and philosophy was forever attached to this second art in the trivium. In the classical Roman period, Rhetoric was the summit of the

¹¹⁶ Ogle, 173.
liberal arts, and leading philosophers like Marcus Aurelius, Seneca, and Cicero were experts in its theory and practice.

Cicero’s *De inventione*, divided into two books, was the most common rhetorical text in Anselm’s lifetime, and is likely the book referred to as “Rhetorica II” in the 12th century catalogue of the Library at Bec. Lanfranc lectured on the work, and as such, Anselm was very familiar with it, which was designed to teach the student how to be persuasive in speech, and famously divides rhetoric into five parts: Invention; Arrangement; Elocution; Memory; and Delivery (*De inv.* I. VII). Obviously concentrating on the first of these five parts of Rhetoric, Cicero’s work focuses on “the conceiving of topics either true or probable, which may make one’s cause appear probable.” In this way rhetoric was intimately involved in philosophy, by arming it with the arguments that would be used to support its assertions.

In *De inventione*, Cicero emphasizes that there is always a “question” that arises in every controversy: “a question either about a fact, or about a name, or about a class, or about an action (*De inv.* I. VIII).” He then proceeds to explain how to determine such questions in a particular case and how to confirm or refute an assertion. Included in Book I is a discussion of how to present a probable argument through both philosophic induction and deduction, including a section on syllogisms. In Book II he explains how to present judicial speeches, deliberative speeches, and epideictic speeches. In short, *De

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118 Cicero, *De inventione*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), I. VII. “And these are the divisions of it, as numerous writers have laid them down: Invention; Arrangement; Elocution; Memory; Delivery. Invention, is the conceiving of topics either true or probable, which may make one's cause appear probable; Arrangement, is the distribution of the topics which have been thus conceived with regular order; Elocution, is the adaptation of suitable words and sentences to the topics so conceived; Memory, is the lasting sense in the mind of the matters and words corresponding to the reception of these topics. Delivery, is a regulating of the voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subjects spoken of and of the language employed.”
Inventione is a handbook of how to persuasively invent an argument, with many examples and specific instructions depending on the question at hand, the facts of the matter, and the goal of the speaker. As it was a leading rhetorical textbook in the eleventh century, it is certain that Anselm would have been exposed to one of antiquity’s finest debaters, and given a blueprint on how to construct persuasive arguments regarding the probability of a question.

The other major textbook of Rhetoric in the eleventh century was the Rhetorica ad Herennium, which listed the major figures of speech and reason. Anselm’s master Lanfranc taught from the work, which gave a standard format for presenting an argument: *exordium* (introductory anecdotes, quotes, or analogies to capture attention), *divisio* (outline of the main points), *confirmatio* (the arguments and evidence supporting the thesis), *confutatio* (refuting conflicting arguments), *conclusio* (argument summary and call to action). This ancient layout is still utilized in many of the five-point essays required in modern academia and in corporate business presentations. We see again, Anselm would be very familiar with how to present a philosophic argument as a result of his rhetorical education.

Furthermore, Rhetorica ad Herennium was most famous for Book IV in which the flores rhetorica or “figures of speech” and “figures of thought” were laid out. Of special interest to philosophy were the nineteen figures of thought: *distributio*, *licentia*, *diminutio*, *descriptio*, *divisio*, *frequentatio*, *expolitio*, *commoratio*, *contentio*, *similitudo*, *exemplum*, *imago*, *effectio*, *notatio*, *sermocinatio*, *conformatio*, *significatio*, *brevitas*, and *demonstratio*. A few of these figures were already named in Cicero’s De inventione, and overlap considerably with the topics of invention. It becomes clear that any philosophic
work will inevitably draw upon these figures in order to elucidate, illustrate, and
annunciate its argument. Thus examples, images, and descriptions are called upon by the
philosophers to help make their point clearer, while divisions, notations, brevity, and
conformations are utilized to present the argument in a persuasive manner. Philosophy
then is no stranger to rhetoric, and the eleventh century liberal arts education in the
subject would equip a writer with the tools necessary to present a philosophic argument
publically.

In the eleventh century, Philosophy was most obviously associated with the
discipline of Dialectic, sometimes called Logic, as indicated by the fact that our
introductory definition includes the word itself. Although as we have discussed,
philosophy was not a separate discipline in the eleventh century, the dissemination of
Aristotle through Latin translations of Boethius had created an educational environment
which would give birth to a new era of philosophical inquiry. Baldwin clarifies the
discipline of dialectics as Anselm knew it: “The medieval order of studies was:
Porphyry’s Introduction, the Categories, Interpretation, Syllogisms, Topics.” 119 This
Boethian contribution to eleventh century dialectic through Aristotle, Cicero and
Porphyry will be discussed in more detail in the next section, but a background on the
dialectic and philosophic climate Anselm found himself will first be delineated herein. 120

After Alcuin had identified philosophy with the whole of the liberal arts in the
eighth century, only a handful of ninth century philosophers emerged worthy of the title,
including the preeminent John Scotus Eriugena, the Eucharistic debaters Ratramnus and
Radbertus, and the great glosser Regimus of Auxerre. Following on the tenth century

119 Baldwin, 89.
120 For an excellent overview of the state of dialectic in the Eleventh Century see Toivo J.
writers Abbo of Fleury and Notker Labeo would leave reflections on syllogisms, as would the famous Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II) in his treatise *On the Rational and the Use of Reason*, which takes philosophy up for its own sake rather than for a direct theological purpose. With dialectic and philosophy on the rise, exemplified in the establishment of the cathedral school by Fulbert of Chartres, there would be a period of intense questioning regarding just how dialectic was to be utilized by Christian thinkers.

The Abbey of Bec had become an academic centre during the eleventh century primarily due to the fame of its prior, Master Lanfranc. Anselm himself had found the famous teacher an intellectual draw, largely due to his reputation for the discipline of *dialectica*. As Anselm says to his master: “there is not one of those whom I have encountered to whose teaching and appraisal I would as willingly and confidently submit as I would to yours.” Although later scholars have declared Lanfranc’s actual ability in dialectic underwhelming, in this era he represented a new height in its availability to theological enquirers. In fact, although no copy survives, the eleventh-century catalogue at Saint-Aper de Toul reveals that the Italian had actually produced his own textbook, *De dialectica*.

Yet, in his definitive work, J. A. Endres identified Lanfranc of Bec as member of a group he labels the ‘antidialecticians,’ who denigrate the use of reason in the affairs of

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theology. According to Endres, other antidialecticians included Peter Damian, Gerard of Czanad, Otloh of St. Emmeram, and Manegold of Lautenbach. Lanfranc is considered to be an antidialectician reservedly, as Endres recognizes that he accepted the liberal arts and their limited use in theology. Yet, in his debate with his former friend Berengar of Tours, Lanfranc charged his opponent with leaving behind church authority and hiding behind dialectic. Berengar would reply that he has a big heart to “in all things hide in dialectic, because to hide in it, is to hide in reason (per omnia ad dialecticam confugere, quia confugere ad eam ad rationem est confugere).” Reason was from God and Berengar felt obligated to utilize dialectic when thinking even about the blood and body of Christ.

Lanfranc’s critique of Berengar, De corpora et sanguine Domini, used dialectic to fight dialectic, and is actually unique in the fact that it is the first document to utilize the Aristotelian terms of accident and substance to defend the presence of the actual body of Christ in the Eucharist. It is in this sense Lanfranc was categorized an antidialectician, in that he thought dialectic needed always to be subordinated to ecclesiastical authority. As such, he became a master of using dialectic as a method of commentating upon Scripture as indicated by his commentaries upon Paul’s Epistles.

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130 Lanfranc of Bec, “In omnes Pauli Epistolae commentarii,” in Migne, PL 101-406.
It is in this light that we see Lanfranc take Anselm himself to task after reviewing his pupil’s ambitious work the *Monologian*. After Anselm’s letter requesting input and correction to this first treatise, Lanfranc critiques his student for not properly citing Augustine as an authority, nor including enough scriptural authorities. Anselm accepted the assessment, but did not change the body of the treatise at all, instead adding a Prologue that cites Augustine’s *De Trinitate*, as an authority for his new work.\(^{131}\) The young monk states:

> If then, someone thinks that I have said here anything which is either too modern, or which departs from the truth, I would ask them not to denounce me as an arrogant modernizer or a maintainer of falsehood. Rather I ask that they first make a careful and thorough reading of the books *On the Trinity* of the aforementioned learned Augustine and then judge my little treatise on the basis of them.\(^{132}\)

Anselm was well aware of the skeptical attitude toward ‘modern’ dialectic that was prevalent in his milieu, and he took steps to argue against it, without personally repudiating his own enthusiasm for the philosophic advances he was witnessing.

The elder yet contemporary Peter Damian, however, was an example of the cautious, even caustic, attitude toward dialectic that Anselm would have to anticipate when advancing his own literary project. A gifted rhetorician, Damian forcibly argued that monks had no need to learn pagan philosophy. Seeing Damian from this polemical lens, Endres and others have read *De divina omnipotentia*\(^ {133}\) as a condemnation of the use of dialectic and logic in doctrinal matters, even suggesting that he denies the law of non-

\(^{131}\) Lanfranc’s reply to Anselm is not extant in either his or Anselm’s published Letters, but Anselm’s reply to it indicates he has acted on the advice; Cf. Anselm, *Anselmi Opera Omnia*, Vols. 1-5, ed. F. S. Schmidt (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961), 199–200.


contradiction. However, both Holopainen and Marenbon have countered that this is a misreading of Damian, who actually deftly discusses how far human logic can go in discussing the omnipotence of God. Peter Damian’s work began with a question from Jerome about whether or not God could restore virginity to a woman who lost it, continuing on to a more general question of whether God could make it so that what has already happened did not happen. He answers that God can do anything including a physical restoration of a virgin, but he cannot do what he does not will to do (i.e. do evil), and that God is timeless and thus the logic of time-bound statements do not constrain Him. God could change the past in the sense of He could make what is a fact now, no longer the case, by changing the past, yet thus also changing the present.

Dialectic, to Damian, is about the necessity of the “consequence of statements” and not about the nature or quality of things in themselves. He has concerns about the misuse of dialectic and gives warnings regarding it to be sure, especially in relation to the sacraments of the Church, yet he exhibits himself a cunning ability in the art. Dialectic is a tool of which he is extremely suspicious, and yet proficient in, simply because for every intellectual educated in this age: “Familiarity with some aspects of the De interpretatione and Boethius’ monographs on the syllogism had made the eleventh-century logician a master of argument.”

If Anselm is more eager to utilize the new dialectic in matters of faith than Lanfranc or Damian, he is not a stranger to the controversy that can arise in its

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136 Marendon, Medieval Philosophy, 93.
137 Ibid., 94.
application to theology. Anselm’s name was invoked as a sympathetic authority by Roscelin of Compiègne when he taught that God was indeed three separate substances. Roscelin reasoned that if God was truly one simple substance (una res) then the Father and Holy Spirit were also crucified with Christ. He was forced to recant this position, although returning to it later. Roscelin’s tritheism was accompanied by a nominalism regarding universals, as he did not believe universals (like whiteness or beauty) existed in reality, they were simply names or words to describe a similar attribute. Anselm saw this anti-Platonic stance on universals to be outrageous and proceeded to take Roscelin to task for it in his De incarnatione verbi. Not mentioning his opponent by name, but giving a full history of the events surrounding Roscelin’s disciplinary hearing by Archbishop Rainald of Reims, Anselm warns harshly against the misuse of logic and dialectic in matters of Christian doctrine:

And all should be warned to approach questions concerning the sacred text of Scripture carefully. Therefore those contemporary logicians (rather, the heretical logicians) who consider universal essences to be merely vocal emanations, and who can understand colours only as material substances, and human wisdom only as the soul, should be altogether brushed aside from discussion of spiritual questions. Indeed, the power of reason in their souls, which ought to be the ruler and judge of everything in human beings, is so wrapped up in material fancies that they cannot extricate themselves from the fancies. Nor can they distinguish from the very fancies the things that, themselves alone and pure, they ought to contemplate (On the Incarnation of the Word, I).

In this way, Anselm has delineated his own course forward, affirming both the ultimate authority of Scripture and established Church dogma, and the proper role of the power of reason to judge the ways of humanity.

This insight is in line with that of Cassidorious who centuries earlier had stated:

How many philosophers through eager reading of secular letters alone have failed to arrive at the fount of wisdom and, deprived of the true light, have been plunged
into the blindness of ignorance! For, as someone has expressed it, that can never be fully discovered which is not sought in the proper manner.\textsuperscript{138}

Although Roscelin had proved to be such a ‘heretical logician,’ Anselm himself would attempt to provide an example of an orthodox logician, utilizing reason in service of the Faith. Peter King describes the situation in which the monk of Bec found himself: “By the latter part of the eleventh century Anselm and Abelard could flourish in an intellectual world in which there was widespread familiarity with the best of the ancient philosophical literature available.”\textsuperscript{139} The groundwork had been laid, and through his liberal arts education, Anselm would become a gifted dialectician and, as a result, one of his era’s greatest philosophers.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Poetic/Dialectic Synthetics}

Anselm was, as has been demonstrated, exposed to the fundamentals of both poetic and philosophic discourse through his education in the liberal arts. Yet, it remains to be discovered how this tradition envisioned the relationship between poetry and philosophy. To begin, it needs to be noted that a major poet, Horace, had authoritatively declared that the love of wisdom is fundamental to the poetic activity:

\begin{quote}

The foundation and source of literary excellence is wisdom. The works written about Socrates are able to reveal the true subject matter of poetry and, once the subject matter has been provided, words will freely follow. […] I bid the artist, trained in representation, to reflect on exemplars of life and character and to bring us living voices from that source. Sometimes a tale that lacks stylistic elegance, grandeur, and skill but is adorned with impressive passages and characters who are accurately drawn is a greater source of pleasure and better holds the interest of an audience than verses that lack a vision of reality and are mere trifles to charm the ear (\textit{Ars Poetica}, 309-322).
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{138} Cassiodorus, \textit{An Introduction to Divine and Human Readings}, 129.
\textsuperscript{139} Peter King, “Philosophy in the Latin Christian West, 750-1050,” 35.
Thus, according to one of the greatest classical Latin poets, the best poetry is built upon wisdom or philosophy, and rational reflection upon life is a prerequisite to any poet who wishes his work to be accepted by the masses. The archetypal poet recommends a philosopher, Socrates, for inspiration. The aim of poetry is “to either benefit or delight us, or, at one and the same time, to speak words that are both pleasing and useful for our lives (Ars Poetica, 333-346).” A good poem will either bring the audience pleasure, or benefit, and more ideally, bring both pleasure and benefit simultaneously. This idea of both delight and usefulness as the aim of poetry will be reflected further in the teaching of Augustine and in the example of medieval writers. The best poetry contains truth, and takes philosophy as a source.

Likewise, poetry could often be the source and authority for maintaining a given philosophic position in the Middle Ages, and quotations from the classical poets abound in philosophic works belonging to the period. For example, Virgil was seen “as a repository for mystical, prophetic, and philosophical truths.”\(^{140}\) Philosophy will make poetry a respected source for illustrating and propagating its truth. Furthermore, as we shall see to be true for Anselm, a philosopher was expected to present his position in as beauteous language as was appropriate to his subject matter. The philosopher was a writer and would do well to utilize the stylistic concerns associated with poetry, as evidenced by the common use of metaphor and analogy in most philosophic works. This is further supported by the fact that many of the literary genres utilized in philosophic works were directly related to poetic composition including Allegory, Dialogue,

Similarly, Turner illustrates that “As early as the ninth century some logicians would use poetry to help them remember how to differentiate the valid moods in the three figures of the syllogism.” In fact, a great deal of poetry from the Middle Ages can be easily labeled “Philosphic Poetry.”

The interdependent relationship of poetry and philosophy is further evidenced in the very foundations of language itself, as taught by the verbal arts of the trivium. Grammar was not only where the classic poets were scrupulously studied, but also an important tool in the dialectician’s arsenal in both constructing and refuting philosophical propositions. The study of grammar, and its reliance upon poetry, was instrumental to philosophy. Both poetry and philosophy are products of a linguistic system, and are therefore subject to the constraints inherent in any system of signs.

The trivium, it must be remembered, is unified in the fact that grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic are all verbal arts. As they share the common building block of words, so they share in the possibilities and liabilities of language. They are unified therein, and differentiated in the main by how the words are used and by which aspect of language’s functions they focus upon. This contestation is supported by the observation of the continual slippage of territory between the three arts and the historically documented wrangling for supremacy that they underwent in the pedagogical system. In fact, it may be tentatively asserted on these grounds that any single linguistic utterance can be appropriately analyzed by all three arts and could be seen to fall under the orbit of each in

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some respect. Every assertion is grammar, every oration rhetoric, and each sentence dialectic.

Ultimately then, the relationship between philosophy and poetry can be seen in the overlapping of grammar with both rhetoric and dialectic, as well as rhetoric with dialectic, further confused as grammar and rhetoric were themselves with poetics. It is precisely these grey areas to which we must attend in order to understand the interrelationship between Anselm’s seemingly disparate works. Augustine, for example, had effectively blurred the boundary between grammar and rhetoric, in his De Doctrina Christiana, when he turned commentary on sacred Scripture into a form of productive hermeneutics.\textsuperscript{144} That which properly belonged to grammar’s ennarratio poetarum (commentary on the poets) was now likened to rhetoric’s inventio. Furthermore, as early as the fourth century, rhetoric and grammar overlapped in the area of style, which was synonymous with the grammarians’ “figures of speech.”\textsuperscript{145} This “conflation of grammar and rhetoric”\textsuperscript{146} became a marked characteristic of medieval exegesis and, in practice, helped lead to the domination of grammar amongst the trivium for most of the middle ages, until the twelfth century. In fact, it is this domination by grammar that chiefly distinguishes monastic humanism from scholastic humanism. As Leclercq makes clear, monastic culture is literary, as opposed to the scientific culture of scholasticism:

This culture does, however, remain profoundly impregnated by literature. It is more literary than speculative. This characteristic differentiates monastic humanism from another, different but no less legitimate, known as scholastic humanism. In the schools, one of the seven liberal arts, dialectics, tends to take precedence over the others to the detriment of grammar, music and rhetoric; clarity of thought was more sought after than artistry in expression and this


\textsuperscript{145} Camargo, “Rhetoric,”105.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 159.
preoccupation is reflected in a language which, by contrast, allows us all the better to appreciate the nature of a non-scholastic language, that of monasticism.\textsuperscript{147}

The nature of this non-scholastic language is one that does not regret the use of rhetorical appeals to the emotions in order to evoke devotional response. For example, the aim in expounding a biblical passage was not simply to clarify what was said but to move the readers or listeners to imbibe the knowledge into their very being, and to act accordingly. To the faithful monk, the over-dependence upon dialectic (for the monks indeed could not ignore the use of logic by authorities such as St. Augustine and Boethius) led to a curiosity that was harmful because it contradicted the humility called for by St. Benedict himself.\textsuperscript{148} In short, the liberal arts were necessary primarily because they prepared the monk for the \textit{lectio divina} and the contemplation of sacred Scripture.\textsuperscript{149}

Just as the conflation of grammar and rhetoric was characteristic of monastic theology, so the miscegenation of dialectic and rhetoric, as well as that of dialectic and grammar, can be discerned as a central dynamic in scholastic theology. First, from the outset, as early as Cicero, “The distinctions between rhetorical and dialectical argumentation are never exactly clear.”\textsuperscript{150} Rhetoric had quickly been identified chiefly with invention, while style, arrangement, memory, and delivery became identified closely with grammar. As invention disassociated itself from the rest of the parts of rhetoric, it “gravitated into the orbit of dialectic,”\textsuperscript{151} aided by the fact that although distinguishing them, Boethius, following Aristotle, ultimately subsumes rhetoric into dialectic.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 239.
\textsuperscript{150} Copeland, \textit{Rhetoric Middle Ages}, 152.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{152} Carmago, 102.
In a related movement, we must acknowledge, with Wagner, that “the shift from grammar to logic as the dominant art of the trivium is a central feature in the history of the liberal arts.”\textsuperscript{153} Furthermore, Anselm himself is often cited as early evidence of the fusing of dialectic and grammar.\textsuperscript{154} Indeed, the very treatise that obsesses over grammatical distinctions, \textit{De Grammatico}, is described by Anselm himself as “an introduction to dialectic” in the preface to \textit{On Truth}. To be certain, Anselm still attests to the existence of a distinction, indeed a fierce opposition, between grammarians and logicians in his own culture (\textit{Gram. 18}). Yet, this difference is chiefly between the descriptive account of the ordinary use of language (\textit{usus loquendi}) and the prescriptive technical use of language (\textit{significatio per se}), a distinction which Anselm utilizes to great effect throughout his entire corpus.\textsuperscript{155} In any case, the fusion of grammar and rhetoric both into dialectic is a hallmark of Scholasticism and results in a remarkable attention to detail. However, as Leclercq indicated before, and as Southern further explicated, for the vast majority of scholastics, this fissiparous fixation came at a great cost:

the real virtues of ancient literature – not its information but its literary beauties and its understanding of human nature – had been neglected by the pedants (as they came to appear) of the school. […] And closer inspection revealed no beauty of style or vivacity of wit to encourage investigation. The beauty of scholastic thought lies entirely in the grandeur of the whole enterprise and in the careful elaboration of details to form a systematic body of doctrine.\textsuperscript{156}

The same element of literary neglect cannot be attributed to Anselm, for, despite his amorous relationship with logic, he never lost the monastic appreciation of the

\textsuperscript{153} Wagner, \textit{Seven Liberal Arts}, 23.
\textsuperscript{154} Jeffrey F. Huntsman, “Grammar” in Wagner, 81. Speaking of Anselm and Abelard, Huntsman states: “Despite their attempts to maintain a separation between grammatical and logical uses of common terms, there was considerable interpenetration of the two fields in the works of these pivotal scholars.”
\textsuperscript{155} Henry, \textit{The Logic of St. Anselm}, 12. Cf. 17.
stylistic elements associated with grammar, and thus the field of rhetoric was never entirely subsumed in the fusion with its fellow verbal arts. Later, in his day, John of Salisbury could bemoan that logic had become separated from artistry, had lost its position as a tool, as a means, and had become an end in itself. Anselm, thankfully, could never be accused of forgetting the literary aspect of his task nor logic’s status as an aid to contemplate the Creator, and, as a result, he used the substantial body of rhetorical figures of speech and thought at his disposal in conjunction with the cutting edge of dialectical formulation in his continual quest for God.

In the eleventh century, the dominance of the three verbal arts ensured that philosophy and poetry were not entirely divided. This is attested to by the fact that many of the same individuals who wrote penetrating philosophy also authored passionate poetry. Alcuin, the father of the Carolingian renaissance to which the eleventh century remained indebted, not only envisioned the liberal arts as a road to true philosophy, and constructed theological treatises utilizing dialectic, he also taught and composed poetry. As Sedgwick puts it: “Yet our schoolmaster poets are not devoid of merit: as schoolmasters they did their work well – probably Latin verse was never more efficiently taught.”157 The founder of the rising School of Chartres, Fulbert, oversaw an institution that would emphasize natural philosophy, yet he was a great master of poetry and hymns.158 Peter Damian, whose caution towards dialectic was matched by his acumen in the art, became most known for his heartfelt poetry. Anselm himself, we shall argue, was

such a poet/philosopher, yet perhaps even more telling in exemplifying the spirit of the age was the number of younger contemporaries who would prove to be gifted in both. Peter Abelard was to become the most famous philosopher and poet in the years following Anselm’s death. His dialectical ability was unmatched, and his music and poetry, especially his *planctus*, influenced subsequent generations. Abelard’s ecclesiastical accuser Bernard of Clairveaux would also prove a gifted writer of prose in dealing with theology and philosophy, as well as a poet of universal renown.

In exploring the relationship between poetry and philosophy in these later twelfth century writers, McKeon developed four different views embodied in their writings all taking their cue from Plato’s famous apposition.\(^{159}\) He rightly points out that throughout history “the relation of poetry and philosophy oscillates between identity and antithesis.”\(^{160}\) The first position is that of Peter Abelard, who will argue “poetic figments are wholly forbidden to Christians” because of their errors and their enticement to disgraceful things.\(^{161}\) The liberal arts and poetic techniques are still necessary but they can be learned from Holy Scripture, not by inviting into the church the very poets Plato banned from his city.

The second position is that of the allegorizing cosmological poets and philosophers who utilize both poetry and prose. Bernard Sylvester in his *De mundi universitate*, saw poetry as allegorizing the truth of philosophy, and saw Virgil as not just a poet but a philosopher, while lesser poets were not worthy of allegorical interpretation.\(^{162}\) Utilizing a similar form of alternating prose and poetry, Alan of Lille

\(^{159}\) McKeon, “Poetry and Philosophy,” 217-234.  
\(^{160}\) Ibid., 217.  
\(^{161}\) Ibid., 221-222.  
\(^{162}\) Ibid., 222-223.
wrote cosmological poetry, yet attacked classical poets for glossing over many falsehoods.¹⁶³ Both of these writers have separated poetry from the liberal arts, making it introductory to philosophy, and thus, though using a similar philosophic/poetic methodology, they can maintain opposing views of the classical poets who went before them.

The third position McKeon describes as that of the humanists and the moderate skeptics who will not separate poetry from the liberal arts, but see it as a useful tool for theology. John of Salisbury will repeat Plato and Cicero’s condemnation of the work of the poets, and yet still praise poetry as essential to education and philosophy.¹⁶⁴ Poetry is a part of grammar and shares the function of imitating nature, and thus contributes to philosophy. Despite needing to avoid the moral pitfalls poetry contains, the pleasures it affords leads to philosophy, and has a proper place in theology.¹⁶⁵

The final position derived from Plato in the twelfth century is that of mystical theology. Some mystics would see poetry as one stage on the way to knowledge of God, while others were suspicious. Hugh of St. Victor sees the indispensable liberal arts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic as separate from “appendages” such as the songs of the poets, and sees it possible to become perfect in reading without them. Hildebert of Lavardin, one of the greatest poets of Anselm’s age, “abandons philosophy as well as poetry as progressive stages in the return to Scripture.”¹⁶⁶ Both “fictions of poets” and “arguments of sophists” are to be given up on the path to God, and yet they are part of the journey. In this instance both poets and philosophers are ultimately castigated.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 224.
¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 225.
¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 225-226.
¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 227.
Interestingly, McKeon argues “All four of these conceptions of poetry, despite the oppositions among them, echo the judgment of Plato by which poets are condemned because philosophers are engaged on a more truly poetic enterprise.” He sees the connecting link as rhetoric and concludes: “The twelfth century was a period in which poets and philosophers were engaged on the same themes, and the poetic expression of philosophy, as well as the philosophic criticisms of poetry, reflect the basic theological problem of the relation of reason and faith.” Although his discussion relates more to the twelfth century, many of McKeon’s exemplars were born in the eleventh century, and his analysis contributes much to understanding the attitudes towards poetry and philosophy during the lifetime of Anselm. There was a considerable overlap between the two, and individuals like Anselm would live in the tension of their complicated relationship, especially in the fact that they were given to writing both.

This overlap between poetry and philosophy is demonstrated in the fact that the ars dictaminis presented a literary medium that was congenial to either. The art of letter writing was unique in that its products could be characterized sometimes as poetry, sometimes as philosophy, and often enough as both. Thus, we could have Peter Damian utilizing the letter format for a dialectical argument in De divina omnipotentia (Letter 119), or sending a rhyming prose correspondence to cherished friends.

In the letters of authors writing in the eleventh century we see a vast spectrum of different forms of prose. From a straight-forward information-conveying text, to

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167 Ibid., 229.
168 Ibid., 230.
169 F. J. E. Raby, Secular Latin Poetry, 371. He states: “For Peter was truly a poet. But it is useless to seek his poetry in the epigrams in which he prolonged, in a new setting, the exercises of his youth. He is a poet first of all in those flights of rimed prose, which show how much of poetry is a sublimation of rhetoric, and how closely related this poetical prose was to the feeling and expression of the new rhythmical verse.”
rhythmical rhyming creations, the epistolary format offered authors a chance to play with the Latin language in all its dimensions, amongst friends. The fact that it was known that letters were often published for a wider audience, encouraged a writer to put considered effort into each correspondence, and thus some of the greatest forms of poetry and philosophy would be communicated as a letter. This of course, harkens back to the great philosophy and poetry contained in the letters of Scripture, and passed down through the later epistles of the Church Fathers, all of which were copied faithfully in the monastic scriptoriums. In the letter, poetry and philosophy were not separate subjects or mediums or modes of literature; the letter was simply an act of writing, and all subjects and methods of writing were acceptable. In fact, the only worry of an author was that his letter would not be deemed worthy of the ideals of *dictamen*.

Curtius outlines that the *ars dictaminis* treated both poetry and prose, and actually broke down into at least three major sub-categories: metrical, accentual-rhythmical, and prose *dictamina*. In fact, there came to be a fourth kind of style, rhymed prose (*mixtum sive compositum*), so what was once a poetry-prose dyad had become a triad or tetrads.

This is further complicated because *prosa* was never understood unequivocally, and there was often artistic as well as simplistic prose, and the term could even refer to rhythmical poems, including sequences. The lines between poetry and prose were blurred, especially in the mixed poetic prose works called *prosimetra*. The boundaries were intentionally crossed, with various meters and rhymes included in letters and other writings.

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171 Ibid., 149-150.
172 Ibid., 151.
It is this last form of literature - the prosimetrum - to which we must turn in closing out our poetic/dialectic analysis of the eleventh century liberal arts education.\textsuperscript{173} The first use of the term prosimetrum seems to be that of Hugh of Bologna in \textit{Rationes dictandi} (c. 1119).\textsuperscript{174} It is not a coincidence then that the late eleventh and twelfth century would see an explosion in the prosimetrum form, some of the best including Anselm’s interlocutor Hildebert of Lavardin in \textit{Philosophia de interiore et exterio homine} (or \textit{Liber de Querimonia et Conflictu Carnis et Spiritus seu Animae}).\textsuperscript{175} Bernardus Silvestris’ \textit{Cosmographia,}\textsuperscript{176} \textit{Mathematicus,}\textsuperscript{177} and \textit{Experimentarius,}\textsuperscript{178} Petrus Alfonsi’s dialogue between Peter and Moses,\textsuperscript{179} Peter Abelard’s \textit{Soliloquium,}\textsuperscript{180} as well as Alain de Lille’s \textit{De planctu naturae}.\textsuperscript{181}

The fondness for this genre in Anselm’s time is best understood as a natural outcome of the deepening liberal arts education in the Western Church, seen especially through the preferential status given to two ancient prosimetric works, Boethius’ \textit{De Consolatione Philosophiae} (to be explored in 2.2) and \textit{De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae} by Martianus Capella. The latter exploration of the marriage between Mercury and


\textsuperscript{174} Dronke, \textit{Verse with Prose}, 2.

\textsuperscript{175} Hildebert de Lavardin, \textit{Liber de Querimonia et Conflictu Carnis et Spiritus seu Animae}, in \textit{PL} 171, ed. Minge, 989-1004.


\textsuperscript{179} Peter Alfonsi, \textit{Dialogus: Patrologia Latina} 157, 535-706.


Philology served as the introductory textbook to the Liberal Arts for all students in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{182} As such, its influence on the eleventh century education of Anselm must be noted, both with its argument that human reason (philology) and eloquence (Mercury) are to be conjoined, and in its literary example of doing just that by juxtaposing and conflating poetic verse with philosophic erudition.

The first Latin \textit{prosimetra} are found in the works of Varro, who imitated the Greek author Menippus, and in turn influenced Petronius’ risqué \textit{Satyricon}\textsuperscript{183} and Seneca’s send up of the late Emperor Claudius \textit{Divi Claudii apotheosis per saturam}\textsuperscript{184} (\textit{The Apotheosis of the divine Claudius in a mixture of prose and verse} also called \textit{Apocolocyntosis}).\textsuperscript{185} When Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}, or \textit{The Golden Ass}, is added to the list we have evidence of a classical precedent for Latin versions of Menippean Satire, utilizing alternating poetic and prosaic sections, often with a goal of satirizing or undermining literary commonplaces.\textsuperscript{186} These works would first become known as \textit{satura}.

The common phrase \textit{lanx satura} referred to a “full mix” or “full medley”, literally “a full dish of various kinds of fruits.”\textsuperscript{187} Quintilian noted this mixed form use of the term as well, but stated that more commonly \textit{satura} referred to a poetic genre using hexameter form, of which Horace and Juvenal were the chief examples, the first with a


\textsuperscript{187} Theodore D. Kharpertian, \textit{A hand to turn the time: the Menippean satires of Thomas Pynchon} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 25-27.
gentle, lighter, self-deprecating critique, the latter with more contempt and ridicule.\textsuperscript{188} In their hands \textit{satura} became a form of “sanative castigation,” a way of correction through biting irony.\textsuperscript{189} This satiric spirit could also be found in the \textit{prosimetra} works of Varro, Petronius, Seneca, and Apuleius, and thus \textit{satura} came to identify an ironic mixed form of prose and poetry that ultimately questioned the very social and cultural world they depicted.

It is telling that at the beginning of \textit{De nuptiis}, Martianus Cappella invokes Satura as the Muse of his work with precisely these meanings in mind:

“Satura” here means not satire but the mixed dish of verse and prose, wittily personified; at the same time, the interchange reveals the essential Menippean quality of undermining the seemingly fixed points of a discourse, of showing the testing and emerging of truth by way of ironically juxtaposed statements and attitudes, that are often themselves ironised in turn. The language, too, reflects this range of juxtapositions.\textsuperscript{190}

Martianus then begins his tale of the messenger god Mercury looking for a suitable bride, and agreeing to Apollos’ suggestion he take the mortal Philology as his wife. The first two books deal with this allegory in detail, setting up the next seven books by presenting Philology’s dowry of seven maidens to the great Olympian feast, who turn out to be the seven liberal arts of \textit{Grammatica, Dialectica, Rhetorica, Geometria, Arithmetica, Astronomia}, and finally the glorious \textit{Harmonia}.\textsuperscript{191}

What ensues is a long encyclopedic walk through the seven liberal arts through speeches made by each of the maidens, punctuated by ironic and subversive interjections by the gods about their boredom, comments on their appearance, and self-deprecating

\textsuperscript{188} Quintilian, \textit{Orators’ Education}, 10.1.95.
\textsuperscript{189} Balnaves, “Bernard of Morlaix,” 66.
\textsuperscript{190} Dronke, \textit{Verse with Prose}, 29.
interaction between Capella and Satura. The allegorical setting is used to bring some joviality and irony to what might be a tedious enterprise to a young man like Martianus’ son to whom it is addressed. As Dronke puts it: “In the Menippean moments of the didactic books the author gives us glimpses of what we might call a meta-encyclopaedia, which is a joyous send-up of the encyclopaedia itself.”¹⁹² This playfulness helps illustrate why the text became the introductory textbook to the monastic education of eleventh and twelfth centuries, as it makes fun of the wearisome nature of the studies, while also rebuking the author’s own lack of seriousness.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Menippean satire in the work comes when Philologia is told she must violently vomit out all human learning if she wishes to become a goddess and marry Mercury. She is forced to throw up streams of literature of various kinds, books and volumes in many languages. At this the seven maidens of the liberal arts begin quickly and happily scooping up the entire result of her nauseous puking, and Philologia is given the immortal elixir to drink and imbue her with divinity. Dronke concludes that Martianus seems to be using this story for ironic undermining purposes, either saying:

| like a mystic, that immortal knowledge is so different from mortal that the soul, to experience divine union, must void itself of all mortal knowledge first; or, like a satirist, that mortal knowledge is, in the last resort, mere regurgitation. Yet the total effect of the comic via negativa and initiation is exhilarating rather than simply mocking: Martianus gives an intimation of the grandeur of the underlying conceptions even while, by dwelling on them over-literally, he shows their grotesqueness and absurdity.¹⁹³ |

This is the irony of De nuptiis, it simultaneously shows the importance, the impudence, and the impotence of human reason.

¹⁹² Dronke, Verse with Prose, 3-16. ¹⁹³ Dronke, Verse with Prose, 37.
The prosimetrum was most explicitly introduced to Anselm via Martianus Capella and Boethius, but there was a tradition in the Medieval period itself of which he would have had at least a vague awareness. We find in the twelfth century catalogue of Bec a reference to Fulgentius, whose *Mitologiae* had a “prosimetric opening” that was known to Boethius and which helped furnish the monastic student, including most likely Anselm, with a wide exposure to the *fabula* of the ancient mythology. Other prosimetrum to which Anselm may have been exposed include Aethicus Ister’s *Cosmographia* (eighth century), Dhuoda’s *Liber Manualis* (ninth century), Notker the Stammerer’s *Metrum de Vita S. Galli* (ninth century), Sedulius Scottus’ *De Rectoribus Christianis* (ninth century), Liutprand of Cremona’s (tenth century) *Antapodosis*, and Rather of Verona’s *Phrenesis* (tenth century). Beyond these works, there were numerous histories and hagiographies that utilized verse in their prose, whether or not they could be deemed full prosimetra. This precedent, as noted previously, laid the groundwork for a swell of philosophically-minded prose-verse works in the late eleventh and early

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twelfth centuries, which is further attested to by an aptly titled anonymous work

*Petronius redivivus*.  

In short, Anselm had a great familiarity with the prosimetric genre, a point we will return to in the discussion of his *Proslogion* (Chapter 4) as it is the assertion of this dissertation that it should itself be considered a prosimetrum. That this possibility may have missed the notice of scholars like Dronke and other specialists may seem difficult to fathom; we must remember that Anselm’s reputation for centuries was that of the dialectic scholastic who actually was instrumental in killing off less analytic modes of philosophic inquiry. For example Uitti declares: “The golden age of *De Nuptis* in Europe lasted from about 1050-1230. […] For much of this two-century period philosophy and philology lived in harmony. […] However, already in the logical works of St. Anselm (later eleventh century) one detects the seeds of future discord.”  

This will be explored in more detail, but for now suffice it to say that recent scholarship has reevaluated the poetic aspect of Anselm’s corpus, and a rigorous analysis of the *Proslogion* itself will yield evidence that it is a work of both prose and verse, including a self-subverting undertone.

The final question regarding the prosimetrum is how does the relationship between poetry and philosophy play out within the genre? What are, as Ziolkowski perceptively puts it, “The Functions of Verse in Prose – or the Functions of Prose in Verse”?  

The relationship between verse and prose sections in these works can be

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multi-faceted and diverse. The verse could act as merely indicators of direct speech, or highlighting important sections, or a mere embellishment, or as mnemonic device.\textsuperscript{206} On the other hand, since the classical period, the deliberate contrast of verse and prose sections served to purposefully undermine the conventional attitudes towards both:

The classical period emphasized a sharp if not an absolute divide between prose and poetry, with orators being the experts in prose, poets in verse. Non-conformists who rebelled against this norm, Menippus and his adherents insisted on merging the two supposed incompatibles and on juxtaposing logic and fantasy, truth and falsehood -- prose and verse.\textsuperscript{207}

In other words, the juxtaposition purposefully questioned the sharp divide between verse and prose, poetry and philosophy. Ziolkowki deftly summarizes the possibilities of such prosimetric forms saying: “Needless to say, the most artful authors related prose to verse in ways that defy easy systemization.”\textsuperscript{208}

Cicero records the original author of \textit{satura} himself, Varro, as saying:

And nevertheless in those old writers of our country whom in my imitation (it is not a translation) of Menippus I treated with a certain amount of ridicule, there is a copious admixture of elements derived from the inmost depth of philosophy, and many utterances in good logical form; and though in my funeral orations these were most easily intelligible to less learned readers if they were tempted to peruse them by a certain attractiveness of style, when we come to the prefaces to my Antiquities, in these my aim was, if only I attained it, to write for philosophers. (\textit{Academica}, 1.2.8)\textsuperscript{209}

Here we have the origins of prosimetrum purposefully connected to a philosophic enterprise. Varro understood that many of his audience were more attracted by the poetic style, but he nevertheless considered philosophic merit to be a prime concern in their composition.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid., 60-61. 
\textsuperscript{207} Ibid., 49. 
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid., 60, n. 62. 
The prosimetric genre attempted to utilize the best of two worlds - poetry and philosophy - in order to undermine their social segregation, and to create a hybrid that opened up numerous literary and philosophic possibilities not inherent to either on their own. This was picked up in the Middle Ages of Anselm’s era and allowed for a poetry and a philosophy that its authors found useful for expression. This is clear in the final assessment of Ziolkowki:

Even if we put aside matters of source and influence, we will conclude that a number of the medieval prosimetra should receive heightened attention because of the intricate layering in voices and styles that they facilitated and encouraged. Their polyphony may not have conditioned the modern Menippean satire or novel, but it reflects a similar willingness to experiment in both form and content.\(^{210}\)

For our purposes, it is important to note that Anselm was part of a climate in which he had been exposed to great poetic works, great philosophic works, and in which the mixed form prosimetrum was on the rise. Many of the great authors he read in the course of his liberal arts studies worked in both didactic prose and in poetry, and some would even combine the two forms in either their letters or formal prosimetra. It would not be a surprise then to see within his own oeuvre a reflection of this variation of writing styles and subject, and it is not a far stretch to think that as one of the eleventh century’s most gifted authors, Anselm might embark on such a confluence of poetry and philosophy in his own *dictamina*.

2.2 BOETHIAN NEO-PLATONIC ARISTOTELIANISM

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was an early sixth century philosopher and poet whose work shaped the entire Medeival period. His foremost accomplishment was the translation and dissemination of the logical works of Aristotle, although his own commentaries were also important. He also presented a use of logic in theological matters that would not find an equal for almost half a millennium. Furthermore, his Consolation of Philosophy became the most important single tome in the Medeival classroom, shaping young students like Anselm not only philosophically but poetically, providing an example of both forms of language being used effectively in a single work.

2.2.1 Poetic Analytics

Although his primary contribution to Anselm’s theology was philosophical, Boethius was also an accomplished poet, whose work can be compared to the best Latin achievements. As Baldwin observes, “The man who interpreted to century after century the logic of Aristotle was a poet.”211 The Boethian style is marked not only by an intimate knowledge of metre, but also by its terseness and a reserved fondness for rhyme and other poetic devices.212 Aside from the lack of metric verse in the Anselmian corpus, these same attributes could also be applied to Anselm’s writing. Boethius would serve as a model of a philosopher who utilized poetry, and furthermore, some of his dissemination of Aristotle’s work would also help contribute to a philosophy of poetry.

211 Baldwin, 100.
212 Ibid., 101-103.
Both poetry and rhetoric are given the status of a science in Aristotle’s philosophy. Aristotle delineates his understanding of poetry in his *Poetics*, although only the first book is extant.\(^{213}\) It is largely a treatise on drama but he begins by showing how the various modes are both united and distinguished:

Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation. They differ, however, from one another in three respects- the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct (*Poetics*, 1.1).

Poetry, like all arts, is at its heart for Aristotle a form of *imitatio*, here a copying of “men in action (1.2).” In poetry, using words, “the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or ‘harmony,’ either singly or combined (1.1).”

Aristotle is quite clear that it is not the use of verse that makes a work poetry, but the use of imitation:

There is another art which imitates by means of language alone, and that either in prose or verse- which verse, again, may either combine different meters or consist of but one kind- but this has hitherto been without a name. For there is no common term we could apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues on the one hand; and, on the other, to poetic imitations in iambic, elegiac, or any similar meter. People do, indeed, add the word ‘maker’ or ‘poet’ to the name of the meter, and speak of elegiac poets, or epic (that is, hexameter) poets, as if it were not the imitation that makes the poet, but the verse that entitles them all to the name. Even when a treatise on medicine or natural science is brought out in verse, the name of poet is by custom given to the author; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common but the meter, so that it would be right to call the one poet, the other physicist rather than poet (1.1).

Thus it is not the form of verse that demarks a work as poetic, but it is the content which utilizes imitation of the lives of men. Aristotle does note that commonly the term “poet”

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is given to writers of history and science who utilize verse form, but he rejects such common usage as inexact.\textsuperscript{214}

The Greek Philosopher believed that poetry sprung from two causes: “the instinct of imitation implanted in man from childhood” and “the pleasure felt in things imitated (1.4).” This is coupled with the fact that humanity has an instinct for harmony and rhythm, and that meter is a subsection of rhythm, and thus “Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry (1.4).”

Aristotle also notes a theory of aesthetics that will become part of the Medieval conception: “Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order (1.6).” Of even greater surprise is how Aristotle allows for poetry a philosophic value:

Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages (1.9). It is this allowance, one imagines, that permits Boethius to endeavour to explore the philosophical questions of providence and free will or the existence of evil in the poetry of his \textit{Consolation}.

Aristotle found the greatest tool at the poets’ disposal was metaphor: “it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances (1.22).” He

\textsuperscript{214} Aristotle states even more clearly in 1.9: “The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose” or again “It clearly follows that the poet or 'maker' should be the maker of plots rather than of verses; since he is a poet because he imitates, and what he imitates are actions.”
speaks on the perfection of style using clarity balanced with the tools of poetic license, maintaining that “in any mode of poetic diction there must be moderation (1.22).”

Although these poetic observations would most likely not have been read by Anselm himself, Boethius would have imbibed this document and both his style and philosophy will serve to transmit much of Aristotle’s poetic aesthetic to the Middle Ages, including our Benedictine monk.

The other Aristotelian work that comes to bear upon our poetic analytic of Boethius is that of the Ars Rhetorica. Rhetoric was something Plato attacked in his earlier treatises, especially in Gorgias, as immoral and the work of sophists trying to manipulate their audience. Later in the Phaedrus, he will acknowledge its usefulness in the hands of a true philosopher to help guide a seeker. Aristotle, will build upon this later notion, and see Rhetoric as a tool alongside Logic and Dialectic, in the work of philosophy. In Book I Rhetoric is defined as the art of persuasion and it gives a general overview to the three genres of rhetoric - deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. Book II lays out the ethos of the speaker, the pathos of the audience, and the logos of the argument as the three means of persuasion. Thus the author’s credibility is one part, the emotional psychology of the listener another, and the logic of the reasoning, especially through the enthymeme, the greatest means of responsible persuasion. The final Book III lays out the possibilities of Style and Arrangement, giving practical advice and examples of figures of speech and reasoning. Interestingly, this final book often points to his Poetics as the place he best develops the rhetorical aspect of Delivery, further solidifying

\[215\] The philosopher argues: “The vehicle of expression is language- either current terms or, it may be, rare words or metaphors. There are also many modifications of language, which we concede to the poets. Add to this, that the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics, any more than in poetry and any other art (1.25).”
the relation between poetry and rhetoric even as the introduction to the work established the link between rhetoric and dialectic.

The *Rhetorica* of Aristotle would influence all later discussion of the topic, and thus laid the ground work for Anselm’s liberal arts education even if it wasn’t directly read. Of great importance is the fact that emotions are given both a place of importance and a logical basis, thus enabling a philosophic monk the leeway to explore that path of human *pathos*. Boethius will find this emotional freedom of great value when dealing with his own miserable situation of imprisonment when writing the poetry and philosophy of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

One of the things that stands out about the *Consolation* may be that Boethius has purposefully chosen different metrical formats in each of his many poetic sections, marking him as a poet able to compete with some of the greatest Latin classical metricians. However, as has been noted earlier, the medieval poetry of Anselm’s day had eschewed the classical forms of poetry restricted by firm syllable counts and regular caesura, in favour of rhythmical poetry controlled by accent and rhyme. This is not to say that Boethius’ style did not influence medieval poetry, rather to point out that influence was less through choice of various and different metres, but more so in his use of natural imagery, classical allusions, emotional content, prayerful reflection, and extended allegory.

The imagery of Boethius was important in developing the entire ethos of the *Consolation*. He will regularly evoke the beauty and order of nature, comparing its

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216 Baldwin, 103. Some of the poetic devices Boethius demonstrates include “a fondness for caesural effects of syncope, for rime, and for subtler recurrences.” However, “Boethius does not remind us of literary devices. He never descends to word-play. His rime is neither insistent nor inclined to the later art of stanzas. It is merged in the other suggestions of a various harmony.”
grandeur and regularity with the seeming chaos of the state of human affairs. This contrast is clear in Book II.5:

O happy was that long-lost age
Content with Nature’s faithful fruits
Which knew not slothful luxury.
They would not eat before due time
Their meal of acorns quickly found,
And did not know the subtlety
Of making honey sweeten wine,
Or how the power of Tyrian dyes
Could colour shining flocks of silk.
A grassy couch gave healthy sleep,
A gliding river healthy drink;
The tallest pine-tree gave them shade.
Men did not plunder all the world
And cut a path across the seas
With merchandise for foreign shores.
War horns were silent in those days
And blood unspilt in bitter hate
To horrify the reddening earth.\(^{217}\)

For Boethius, the contrast between nature, created and laid out by an omniscient God, and the fickle world of blood-thirsty, crude, and foolish humanity could not be starker. The effect is bitter-sweet because it causes the poet pain to see such orderly wonders as the stars, heavens, and seasons, when his own life gives evidence of misfortune and disorder where the innocent suffer while the wicked flourish (Bk. I.5) These meditations upon the order and beauty of nature would be influential in setting the stage for medieval poetic reflections to come.

Boethius also made it respectable for medieval poets to include allusions to the classical poetry of the most famous Latin figures. In the very opening passage of the work, written in poetic metre, “Boethius’ language is that of his predecessors in Roman poetry—there are echoes of Vergil, Horace, Seneca, Prudentius, and most pertinently, of

Ovid’s elegies from his exile.²¹⁸ Such learned use of pagan authors (besides Prudentius) will give medieval writers permission to not only read and teach from these authors, but to allude to them formally in their work. In a monastic culture saturated in the tradition of the Church Fathers, where there is considerable caution towards “poetic fictions”, the example of Boethius will allow Christian authors an authority in the use of pagan poetic literature. We have already noted that Anselm himself had deep acquaintance with classical poetry, and the example of Boethius would have justified such knowledge in his eleventh century context.

Another notable feature of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* is the emotional content of the poetic metrical sections. The work begins with Boethius in the state of inconsolable *dolors*. He is “driven by grief to shelter in sad songs” with “elegies that wet my face with tears (Bk. I.1).” Boethius laments:

> Old age came suddenly by suffering sped,  
> And grief then bade her government begin:  
> My hair untimely white upon my head,  
> And I a worn out bone-bag hung with flesh (Bk. I.1).

The poem continues with talk of “invocations from the wretch” with “hopeless cries” and “weeping eyes.” (Bk. I.1) The author is shameless with his descriptors of misery, and Philosophy calls him on it immediately upon her appearance after his self-pitying outbreak. She expels the Muses of Poetry who were beside his bed dictating words to accompany his tears (I.1). Yet she herself understands the use of such emotional catharsis in poetry and immediately crafts her own poetic song to “recite the following lines about my confusion of mind (I.1).”

> ‘So sinks the mind in deep despair  
> And sight grows dim; when storms of life

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Blow surging up the weight of care,
It banishes its inward light
And turns in trust to the dark without. […]
Now see that mind that searched and made
All Nature’s hidden secrets clear
Lies prostrate prisoner of night.
His neck bends low in shackles thrust,
And he is forced beneath the weight
To contemplate – the lowly dust (Bk. I.2).

Philosophy herself is saddened by the state in which she finds her former student and practitioner Boethius – not only a prisoner unjustly accused, but one so forlorn he has lost the insight she once provided. And only poetry allows her to both express her own emotions, and allay the emotional state he’s succumbed to.

This introspective poetic expression of the inner state of Boethius as prisoner, is something that is imitated in the middle ages, and will allow Anselm and others to explore their inner psyche in a realistic fashion, not simply giving pat philosophic answers to life’s problems, but connecting emotionally with their psychological consequences to the individual. We will see in his Orationes that the monk of Bec is not afraid to express the emotional trauma he feels in a poetic medium.

This emotional expression is of course related directly to the subject of prayer. Anselm’s poetry will be expressed largely in the form of Christian prayer, and Boethius is again a forerunner in this department. The poetry of complaint and entreaty is also modeled in the Consolation, in the first chapter:

O Thou who blindest bonds of things
Look down on all earth’s wretchedness;
Of this great work is man so mean
A part, by Fortune to be tossed?
Lord hold the rushing waves in check,
And with the bond thou rul’st the stars,
Make stable all the lands of earth (Bk. I.5).
Such petitioning in what Philosophy calls the “angry verses you prayed” (Bk. I.5) is reminiscent of the psalms, and Boethius’ introduction of it into a work concerned with philosophy will set a precedent for medieval authors. Anselm himself will open the Proslogion with complaint and entreaty, asking God to bring light to a humanity weighed down by its own sin. Boethius’ emotional prayer asking God to remedy the plight of humankind at the beginning models a poetic manner of introducing a philosophical problem that Anselm can explore and expand upon.

But the prayer doesn’t end there; medieval and later commentators argue that the central piece of the entire Consolation is the poetic prayer O qui perpetua (Bk. III.9). The poem is set up in with a discussion of how Boethius is to take the next step in his understanding of the deepest of philosophical questions regarding divine providence and human evil:

‘But since in the Timaeus my servant Plato was pleased to ask for divine help even over small matters, what do you think we ought to do now in order to be worthy of discovering the source of the supreme good?’
‘We ought to pray to the Father of all things. To omit to do so would not be laying a proper foundation (Bk. III.9).’

Prayerful reflection becomes in the Consolation the “proper foundation” to any pursuit of philosophical truth. As we will see, Anselm utilizes this insight to a degree hitherto unseen when he drafts the entire Proslogion as a philosophic prayer.

Aristotle had stated that prayer is to be placed under the ars poetica and Boethius’ prayer makes use of hortatory oratory by requesting divine aid in their philosophic quest:

Grant, Father, that our minds Thy august seat may scan,
Grant us the sight of true good’s source, and grant us light
That we may fix on Thee our mind’s unblinded eye (Bk. III.9).

\[219\] Dronke, Verse with Prose, 44.
The Boethian prayer is reflective of a perspective that Anselm will adopt - it is in prayer that illumination becomes available. The metaphor of light and philosophic understanding is important for both Boethius and Anselm. The divine is in unapproachable light, and only by prayer that God may allow the mind to see the deeper truth which philosophical inquiry desires. The poetry of prayer gives access to intelligible truth which humanity desires in the midst of its laborious intellectual questioning. It isn’t merely poetic embellishment; it is a means of philosophic accomplishment.

A final reflection on the poetry of the *Consolation* in relation to medieval poetry generally, and Anselm specifically, involves Boethius’ use of extended allegory. Dronke argues that Boethius’ *Consolation*, “not only features allegorical figures but is the first prosimetrum, to my knowledge, where allegory plays a vital role in the whole imaginative organization of the work."\(^{220}\) The interplay between the sad prisoner Boethius, and his glorious consoled Philosophy, makes for the entire framework of the work, thus creating an imaginative atmosphere that lends to the philosophical content. Although Anselm will not utilize such an obvious form of allegory, he too will set the *Proslogion* as a prosimetrum controlled by a singular poetic device – a prayer. In a sense, the *Proslogion* is a an extended dialogue between the author and his God, foregoing intermediaries like Philosophy, yet retaining Boethius’ methodology of a singular controlling poetic device. The late Roman writer demonstrates that a poetic device can structure an entire work exploring a serious philosophic inquiry, and Anselm would take that insight to heart.

\(^{220}\) Ibid., 38.
2.2.2 Dialectic Analytics

Boethius’ primary influence on Anselm was as a conduit and translator of the philosophical works of Aristotle. The monk of Bec is found commentating at length upon the Latin version of *On the Categories (De categoriae)* in a treatise called *De Grammatico*, apparently among his first works. Anselm specifically refers to that work as “an introduction to dialectic” and mentions Aristotle by name seven times, including several specific references to *On the Categories*, while an eighth reference to the ancient philosopher can be found in *Why God Became Man* (II, 17).\(^{221}\) This makes Aristotle the most explicitly referenced external source in the Anselmian corpus outside of the Scriptures. Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo* is replete with allusions and citations of the Hellene, as well as precise comments on the construction of syllogisms, their refutation, and their reconstruction.\(^{222}\) The subtlety of Anselm’s logic and his precision in phraseology demonstrates an intellect that is quite at home in the fields of both the “logicians” and the “grammarians,” as he calls the practitioners of the two disciplines he engages therein (*De Grammatico*, 18).

And yet Anselm owes his familiarity with Aristotelian logic largely to the translations and commentaries of Boethius. Baldwin argues that when it came to Dialectic, “The medieval order of studies was: Porphyry’s Introduction, the Categories, Interpretation, Syllogisms, Topics.”\(^{223}\) In regards to Anselm, Henry points out:

“Although there may exist some uncertainty as to exactly which of Boethius’ works were

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\(^{222}\) Anselm, “Cur Deus Homo,” in Anselm, *Basic Writings*, 342. “I am incapable of rebutting your lines of argument. For I can in no way invalidate either the propositions which you are adducing as premises or the consequences which you are inferring.”

\(^{223}\) Baldwin, 89.
available at the time of Anselm, the quotations and forms of expression which he uses show that Latin versions of Aristotle’s *Categoriae* and *De interpretatione* along with Boethius’ commentaries thereon, were certainly at his disposition."\textsuperscript{224} In the twelfth century library at Bec we see in the Becker catalogue List No. 127 what appears to be the basic liberal arts curriculum including the listing of: “dialectice III. Utrumque commentum super Porphirium. Primum super catheg. Prium, secundam super periermenias. Commentum super topica Ciceronis."\textsuperscript{225} It seems that by that time at least, the Dialectic curriculum at Bec was thus Boethius’ commentary on Porphyry’s commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*, his two commentaries on Aristotle’s *On Interpretation*, and his commentary on Cicero’s *Topics*. It is important in understanding Boethius’ influence on Anselm to take a moment to delve into these works.

Boethius’ Latin translation of Porphyry’s Greek *Isagoge*, otherwise known as *Introductio in Praedicamenta* or *Categoriae*, was accompanied by a commentary and would serve as the primary introduction to logic throughout the middle ages until the scholastic period. This work highlighted especially the difficult issue of the problem of the existence or non-existence of universals, the very issue over which Anselm scolded Roscelin. Do universals exist in the world and subsist on their own, or are they merely words or concepts that depend upon the human mind?

In his *Categories*,\textsuperscript{226} Aristotle lays out ten different categories under which all entities may be placed in order to be properly the subject or the predicate of a proposition. These ten *praedicamenta* delineate every possible object that a human could

\textsuperscript{224} Henry, 7. Henry gives evidence by detailing allusions and quotations (p.8).
\textsuperscript{225} Becker, 266.
ever properly gain knowledge. These categories are: substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action, or affection (Categories 4). The opening discussion (Categories 1) of equivocal and univocal terms is utilized by Anselm to set out his argument in De Grammatico, with a possible interpretive problem serving as the basis for the entire dialogue. The bulk of the Categories is spent on substance, quantity, quality, and relation, and the final three categories are actually breezed over in a single paragraph. The entire work is concise and relatively short, yet its content some of the most discussed and debated of Aristotle’s writing.227

Aristotle’s On Interpretation (De Interpretatione)228 discusses the complicated relationship between language and logic. The work begins with a discussion of words with the famous definition: “Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words.” (Chapter 1) Aristotle continues by delving into nouns (Chapter 2), verbs (Chapter 3), sentences (Chapter 4), and simple and complex propositions (Chapter 5). The logical problems of affirmations and negations are then explored (Chapter 6), followed by questions of universal and particular propositions (Chapter 7). The famous “square of opposition” (Chapter 8) discusses four types of sentences that appear in syllogisms: the universal affirmative (“every man is white”), the particular negative (“not every man is white”), the particular affirmative (“some men are white”), and the universal negative (“no man is white”). This technical discussion is followed by an even more important discussion of the logic of modality (Chapter 9). It contains the question of the relation of logic to time, especially the truth

or falsity of propositions regarding the past and the future. He declares “propositions correspond with facts” and thus the truth of a statement is determined by whether it proposes what was true of the past or what will be true in the future. This is the famous question about the sea battle: “A sea-fight must either take place to-morrow or not, but it is not necessary that it should take place to-morrow, neither is it necessary that it should not take place, yet it is necessary that it either should or should not take place to-morrow.” The question of possibility and necessity will become very important as the first introduction of the logical question of modality, important for our study as Anselm’s argument in the Proslogion will become subject to an intense debate regarding modal logic. Following this discussion of logical modality, the author lists the ways in which affirmations and denials can be distributed related to indefinite terms (Chapter 10).

Aristotle introduces another topic important to Anselm’s Proslogion argument - the function of the verb “is.” He argues that the verb can be used to state existence, as in “man is”, or to serve as a copula in conjunction with a third term, as in “man is just.” The use of existence in grammatical argumentation will become a major question in modern analyses of Anselm’s Proslogion argument. The eleventh chapter deals with dialectical questions that actually contain two separate predicates and thus actually need to have two separate answers. Thus some questions may appear to contain one proposition but have two, while others may be confusing but actually contain only one proposition, i.e. “the unity is linguistic and not real.” (Chapter 11). This difference between linguistic being and real being is again a distinction Anselm will draw upon when he discusses things ens verba and ens res. The following two chapters deal further with modal assertions and questions of potentiality or actuality, and “possibility or
contingency, impossibility or necessity” (Chapter 12-13). Here Aristotle builds upon his earlier work and sets up what is called the Modal Square of Opposition. Again, these modal questions bear directly upon our present subject, and of particular interest to study of Anselm is Aristotle’s argument that “necessity and its absence are the initial principles of existence and non-existence, and that all else must be regarded as posterior to these (Chapter 13).” Aristotle concludes with a summary that sets up dialectical refutation, that if a proposition is shown to be false, its contradictory is to be accepted as truth. This law of non-contradiction serves as the basis of all dialectical argumentation (Chapter 14). As such, De Interpretatione is not simply a discussion of propositions, but specifically of contradictory statements and the central role they play in refutation, which is the goal of all dialectic.229

The third work that was vital to medieval logical study was Boethius’ translation and commentary In Ciceronis Topica.230 Boethius commentary works through the topical differentiae, which are classifications of forms of arguments that can be used in logical disputation. The tradition of topical argumentation begins with Aristotle’s Topics, which was a treatise on the art of discovering arguments. These involve using certain strategies in concert with a specific principle to produce a line of argument.231 Cicero will attempt to delineate Aristotle’s Topics in his own work In Ciceronis Topica, although it will differ in many ways, primarily as it works from centuries of rhetorical and legal use of Aristotle’s original work.232 The topics are not so much the general principles themselves,

229 For a recent articulation of the whole of the work see C. W. A. Whitaker, Aristotle’s De Interpretatione (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003).
232 Ibid., 8.
as the classifications for the principles. Cicero will summarize Aristotle’s topics succinctly and not give details on how they are to be used, but Boethius in turn will elaborate on them at length in his commentary. Thus medieval scholars such as Anselm inherited a work that reflected an amalgamation of thinking about logic not only from Aristotle and Cicero, but also integrated with reflections on Plato, the Stoics, and Boethius himself.

The work is too vast to try and summarize adequately in this space, but some of the more important aspects for understanding Anselm’s education in dialectic will be highlighted. Book I serves as an introduction that breaks down the nature of logic and the Topics (including distinguishing between Aristotle and Cicero’s understanding), as well the division of topics into: from the whole, from the parts, from a sign, from related issues, and from designation. Of importance is that there are outlined three types of argument: “necessary, readily believable, and sophistical.” As such logical discovery can produce certainty, probability, or falsity. Nelis argues that ICT subordinates deduction to discovery, and thus blurs the distinction between Aristotelian deductive logic that yields certain truth and dialectic which yields only probability.

Book II works through the topic of related things, with a very important discussion of a comparison of greater, lesser, and equal things. Anselm’s use of “greater” in arguments from both his Monologion and Proslogion is directly dependent upon the notions contained herein. In Book III, further discussion on the distinction and order of topics is followed by a full treatment of the nature of definitions and methods of making

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233 The following summary is indebted to Stump’s excellent Introduction to In Ciceronis Topica, especially the section on its organization in pp. 14-17.
235 Nelis, 162-163.
and using them in argumentation. Again, the \textit{Prosligion} will use one famous definition as the source of argumentation for the entirety of the treatise, directly influenced by this Boethius commentary.

The nature of partition, designation, and related things makes up the bulk of Book IV, including discussion of categorical and conditional arguments. Book V is of great importance for understanding Anselm’s use of syllogistic logic as it introduces the seven Stoic modes of hypothetical syllogisms, including Boethius’ commentary and criticism of Cicero’s presentation. It also delves into Aristotle’s list of four causes, and includes substantial original material from Boethius’ reflection on the Stoic concept of Fate, and his own understanding of chance in relation to Aristotle and Cicero’s theories. The final Book VI reviews the purposes of topics, arguments, questions, propositions and terms, as well as effects, comparison, division, and the use of authority. All said, \textit{In Ciceronis Topica} serves as a comprehensive textbook on the nature of logic, syllogisms, and how to construct arguments, and it supplied Anselm with a breadth of understanding that he could utilize in his own logical work, as well as the theological treatises.

Before continuing, it is necessary to discuss Boethius’ understanding of \textit{differentiae}, maximal propositions, and the laws of reasoning. The \textit{differentiae} are the topics used for discovering arguments, the list of different approaches one may take in trying to come to the dialectician’s desired conclusion. Each \textit{differentiae} is associated with a \textit{maxima propositio} that gives it the force of logic.\footnote{John Marenbon, “Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius”, \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy}, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Fall 2010) \url{http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/boethius/}.} Maximal propositions are known in and of themselves and do not need demonstration.\footnote{Nelis, 156.} Nelis will state that Boethius is conflating the logic of Aristotle and the rhetoric of Cicero in his maximal
proposition: “On the one hand a Topic is a ‘place’ from which arguments are drawn, and on the other hand it is an axiom or principle of demonstration.” The most powerful of these are very laws of reasoning such as modus ponens and modus tollens, the weakest would be ‘from authority.’ These maximal propositions are key to the Boethian logic of discovering arguments; indeed, Nelis will argue that Anselm utilizes his famous “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” as a maximal proposition in the Prosligion.

Beyond providing the logic textbooks that Anselm would be exposed to, Boethius also provided Anselm with a model of how rigorous Aristotelian logic could be applied to matters of the Christian faith. In his theological tractates, the opuscula sacra, the Roman Christian logician uses a method of “logical analysis in a theological context which Augustine had anticipated but not developed.” Interestingly, the tractates deal with the logical issues which Anselm himself will treat in detail. The issue of the nature of the Trinity, which Boethius addresses in both The Trinity is One God Not Three Gods and Whether Father, Son, and Holy Spirit May Be Substantially Predicated of the Divinity develops a logical response to accusations of the irrationality of the theological doctrine of the Trinity. Anselm must refute Roscelin’s claim that there are in fact three gods in his own writing, utilizing similar notions of substance and relation to Boethius’ argumentation.

Likewise the ancient author’s work in How Substances can be Good in Virtue of their Existence Without Being Absolute Goods will deal with the ontological questions of

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238 Nelis, 159.
239 Ibid., 155.
whether physical entities can be called “good” because of participation in a higher “Good” or as substantial instances of goodness itself. This discussion will be of utmost importance to the chain of reasoning Anselm presents in the *Monologion*. In *On the Catholic Faith*, Boethius used Aristoleian logic to defend the body of orthodox Christian doctrine, while *A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius* labored to demonstrate how the heretical positions were logically contradictory. In doing so, Boethius was instrumental in making logic a mainstay of theology.\(^{242}\) As such, he provided an ancient example to Anselm that Aristotelian logic could be used with confidence in service to the Church. This is most clearly shown in the fact that Anselm will on several occasions follow Boethius’ lead by utilizing the genre of treatise or tractate in the course of his writing endeavours, especially when dealing with controversial issues in *On the Incarnation of the Word, On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit* and *The Compatibility of God’s Foreknowledge, Predestination, and Grace With Human Freedom*.

However, Boethius’ theological tractates also demonstrated that issues like the nature of the relationship between the divine and human nature of Christ, and the relations of the Trinity, could not be completely placed within the categories of Aristotelian philosophy. As Marenbon notes: “Boethius tries to chart exactly how far these distinctions, which are accommodated to the created world, also apply to the deity, and at what point they break down and provide us merely with an analogy.”\(^{243}\) In doing so, Anselm is given an ancient caution that there are limits to human reason, and that the Divine Nature is ultimately greater than human thought is able to determine. The


\(^{243}\) Marenbon, 2010.
Proslogion will make this point sharply, even as it argues the truths of Catholic doctrine through Aristotelian argumentation, following the Boethian example.

The long shadow of Aristotle, as passed down and interpreted by Boethius, covers the entirety of Anselm’s theological works, a fact that has led many scholars to view him as the true father of Scholastic theology. Such one-to-one correspondence is, of course, overly simplistic, but it must be recognized that Anselm is a leading figure in the popularization of a theology informed by Aristotelian logic. It could be argued that Boethius’ own influence on Anselm in this regard has been extremely underestimated. Anselm seems particularly inspired by the declaration in *The Consolation of Philosophy* to Dame Philosophy about her logical argumentation towards theological principles: “All of which you unfolded without the help of any external aid, but with one internal proof grafted upon another so that each drew its credibility from that which preceded.” 244 The force of these words is echoed famously in the prologue to Anselm’s first great meditation, the *Monologion*: “But what I say at that point is expressed in the person of someone who, by reasoning alone, is investigating and arguing through things to which they have not before turned their attention.” This seeming proto-Enlightenment cry of “by reason alone” 245 is echoed again in the first chapter of the same work, apparently inspired by the monk’s brethren who asked that “nothing whatsoever to be argued on the basis of the authority of Scripture, but the constraints of reason concisely to prove, and the clarity of truth clearly to show, in the plain style, with everyday arguments, and down-to-earth dialectic, the conclusions of distinct investigations.” 246 Two

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244 Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, 117.
246 Anselm, *Monologion*, Prologue. It might be further noted that Anselm intentionally adopts the “plain style” for this work in order to make his argumentation perspicuous.
characteristics of the Anselmian project of the Monologion show a congruence with Boethius’ earlier statement: 1) that no “external aid” or authority was used besides logical proof; and 2) that each argument was “grafted upon another,” as Anselm himself points out in the preface to the Proslogion, where he describes his earlier work as “made up of a connected chain of many arguments.” The latter point is also made clear in Why God Became Man, where he says that he “proves, by unavoidable logical steps,” the need for Christ’s redemption. Thus Boethius influenced Anselm with his own original writings, not only in his role as the conduit of Aristotle.

Beyond providing an Aristotelian methodology and a theory of logic to Anselm, the writings of Boethius also provided plenty of content for the metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology for the Archbishop of Canterbury. Boethius made it clear that his project was both to translate and demonstrate a concord between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Following the Stoic and Neo-platonic philosophers of his time, he attempted to reconcile the doctrine of Plato’s Timaeus with the Physics of Aristotle. What resulted was an ontology of transcendentals in the One, the True, and the Good, coupled with a realism of Aristotelian scientific observation. This attempted synthesis would be accepted in the medieval schools so that Anselm will inherit a metaphysics that is largely Platonic (in line with Augustine and the Church Fathers), while his epistemology will be heavily influenced by the logic of deduction and realist induction.

Furthermore, Boethius’ work in the Consolation of Philosophy will provide Anselm with an example of seeing the Good as the highest form of Being, despite the problem of Evil, and its ontology will heavily influence the thinking of the Monologion.

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248 Curs Deus Homo, Preface.
The *Consolation* also provided an articulation of a logical solution to the problem of how God could sovereignly predestine all things and yet humanity still have free will, the very issue dealt with in Anselm’s *De Concordia*. These fundamental philosophical questions were shaped and stamped by Boethius’ works, and Anselm was obviously indebted to his presentation and solutions to the problems.

Finally, the place of the character Philosophy in the *Consolation* must be addressed, as Boethius exults her position in his dealing with the unfortunate circumstances in which he found himself. Philosophy is shown to be a loving yet stern personification, who takes time and care in helping to weed out the foolishness of his thinking processes. Her intention is to help the prisoner come to remember the truths of reality that can be hidden in emotion and error. The Divine Good is the object of her quest, and the tools of reason are a means of reconciling the soul to its Father God. In this presentation, Philosophy is not just a human endeavour, but a divine task, and the gift of reason is seen as capable of leading a person to the Divine Truth. Such a characterization of philosophy will ensure that despite the suspicions of dialectic and philosophy in the monasteries of the Middle Ages, the proliferation of Boethius’ masterpiece will provide room for a scholar of Anselm’s stature to explore the philosophic enterprise in conjunction with his religious vows.

### 2.2.3 Poetic/Dialectic Synthetics

*The Consolation of Philosophy*, which was read by practically every learned person during the medieval period, is especially useful in discussing the relationship of poetry to philosophy. The *Consolation* skillfully fuses together several genres and is
marked by the interspersion of thirty-nine poems throughout the philosophic work. To be sure, for Boethius, poetry is ultimately subordinated to philosophy, as Book I’s vision of Dame Philosophy excoriating the poetical muses and running them off graphically relates. As one commentator observes, “It is not by accident that the *Consolation* begins with verse and ends with prose.”\(^{249}\) Yet poetry is not completely vituperated, as it plays an integral role in the work, serving as a relief from the concentrated arguments and complementing the philosophical substance of the work by presenting it more beautifully. Philosophy is herself quite proficient and magnificent in constructing poetic language.

This is entirely in line with the Aristotelian perspective on the relationship of poetry and philosophy as was explored in the discussion above on the *Poetics*. The Peripatetic declares: “Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history (*Poetics* 1.9).” This relationship between poetry and philosophy is important, and later medievals textbooks will even place poetry as a branch of logic. This utilitarian conception of poetry in the service of philosophy is quite evident in the *Consolation*, though, it will be demonstrated, not the entire picture.

The work begins with a poem expressing the grief of Boethius, the author, a prisoner in is own library due to the unjust anger of the Emperor. It is a self-pitying product dictated by the “Muses of Poetry”, and when the “awe-inspiring” figure of a woman appears she angrily banishes the poetic Muses who are indulging his sadness, so that she can invite her “own Muses to heal and care (*Consolation* I.1).” However, this is not a repudiation of poetry per se, as this figure, now identified as Philosophy, immediately begins to “recite the following lines about my confusion of mind.” It is a

sad song about Boethius’ loss, which is quickly followed by another after she wiped the
tears from his eyes. The next poem is a summary of her prose about the suffering of
previous philosophers and a rousing call to steel oneself to accept Fate. Boethius then
lays out his complaint in prose, followed by a prayer crying to the Creator to set things
right amongst humans as is done in Nature.

Philosophy will reply with an interesting comment about how she can help bring
him out of this predicament:

In your present state of mind, while this great tumult of emotion has fallen upon
you and you are torn this way and that by alternating fits of grief, wrath and
anguish, it is hardly time for the more powerful remedies. I will use gentler
medicines. It is as if you had become swollen and calloused under the influence
of these disturbing passions, and by their more gentle action they will temper you
ready to receive the strength of a sharper medicament (I.5).

She states that it is the emotional tribulation that must first be addressed, gently, and it
seems that poetry has some part to play in this medication as she immediately breaks into
verse. After the poem that starts I.6, Philosophy begins to probe his understanding,
finding hope that he knows all things are governed by God, but saddened that he cannot
answer how He guides creation, nor what is the end and purpose which Nature is directed
towards. When he declares that “man is a rational and mortal animal” and not something
else more, she declares this is the cause of his sickness, that he does not understand his
true nature. A critique of the Aristotelian definition of humanity is implicit in this
comment. But she now feels she can work with his belief in God and states “I will try to
lessen this particular fog little by little by applying entire remedies of only medium
strength (I.6).” It is then that another poem is invoked to dispel the cloud of emotions,
not just fear and grief, but even hope and joy, in order to “look on truth / And follow the
path / With unswerving course (I.7).” Thus in Book I we see one of the ways in which
poetry and philosophy are related, poetry can serve to express the pain of the heart, as well as soothe such pains, and even lead the heart to set all emotion aside, to make way for the truth Philosophy wishes to provide.

Yet the role of emotions in the questions of Philosophy is not the only role for poetry in the *Consolation*. Poetry is also helpful in bringing light to the complicated topics of philosophy, through poetic devices like metaphor, simile, imagery, and allegory. In this way, poetry is a resource that philosophy can depend upon to help make difficult ideas comprehensible. As Curley puts it, sometimes the poetry “serves to illustrate points made in the prose sections with the more vivid images of poetry.”250 The density and difficulty of philosophic enquiry can be off-putting, and poetry allows it to be more inviting.251 We have demonstrated this in the poetic analytic, the poetic descriptions of the order of the heavens and nature make the point of how disparate the disorderly human world is much more poignantly than mere academic prose is able. Dronke makes clear “Winds and stars, ocean and sky, sun and moon, night, dawn and day, recur in the poems over and over. They can be evoked for a likeness […] but they can also be evoked for an unlikeness.”252 The imagery of poetry both mirrors the reality of humanity, and starkly contrasts with it. Boethius’ use makes this philosophical reality readily apparent.

Another example is the masterful poem about the master of poems Orpheus, which Philosophy sings to Boethius as an example of the prisoner himself. The mythic songwriter subdued all things with his song, except his mood, and when he went to the underworld to retrieve his wife, his music almost saved them both. The monarch of the

252 Dronke, *Verse With Prose*, 43.
dead gave permission for them both to leave, but Orpheus did not heed the warning that he could not look back at her, and this sealed her fate. Philosophy uses this illustration to drive home her point that Boethius must keep his eyes towards the light of God through reason, and not be dragged back down by his emotions or worry. Her example ends with a call to press forward in the light of reason:

For you I sing the sad affair,
Whoever seek the upward way
To lift your mind into the day;
For who gives in and turns his eye
Back to the darkness from the sky,
Loses while he looks below
All that up with him may go (III.12).

However, poetry may not only illustrate an argument of a prose section, in the *Consolation* poetry often serves to actually further the philosophical argument. In Book II there is a discussion of *Fortuna*, and her seemingly fickle ways of handing out riches and taking them away, giving happiness and then misfortune. Philosophy uses both prose and poetry to discuss and even impersonate the ways of Fortune, but then declares that happiness cannot be found in things or circumstances but is always within. If a person allows material and history to dictate happiness, they will not be able to maintain happiness. And then Philosophy speaks in poetry, giving advice to secure happiness by protecting it within:

The careful man will wish
To build a lasting home
Unshakeable by winds
That thunder from the East (II.4).

The metaphor of building a safe house is used to further her point and give instruction to Boethius to protect his happiness. She says to “shun the open sea [...] choose no mountain peeks [...] no thirsty sands [...] flee the dangerous lot [...] Secure on lowly
If one listens to Philosophy, and does not allow the vicissitudes of life to shake the certainty of truth, happiness can be protected:

Though thunderous winds resound
And churn the seething sea,
Hidden away in peace
And sure of your strong-built walls,
You will lead a life serene
And smile at the raging storm (II.4).

Another aspect of the relationship of poetry and philosophy in the *Consolation* is that “The poetry is there at times in order to say what could scarcely be said any other way: poetic images can sometimes show what is beyond the power of prose statements to express.” As an example he cites Book II where Philosophia reveals that she doesn’t oppose Fortuna, because it is important for humanity “when she reveals herself, when she throws off her disguise and admits her game (II.8).” In a sense bad fortune is more useful than good fortune. She states: “What I want to say is a paradox, and so I am hardly able to put it into words (II.8).” Philosophy shows how this misfortune has given Boethius knowledge about who was a true friend and who was not, and other lessons he could not have learned without the difficult change of circumstances. Thus Fortuna shows the hidden harmony of the universe when she brings disharmony into the lives of humanity. And the poetry that follows will better reveal this mystery in its imagery and poetic unity than the prose explanations ever could:

The world in constant change
Maintains a harmony,
And elements keep peace
Whose nature is to clash (II.8).

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253 Dronke, *Verse with Prose*, 43.
The imagery of the sun and the moon going forth, and the tides which hold back the sea, display a Love that holds everything in unity. And the poetry itself displays this unity, making its concluding crying even more powerful than could be put in prose:

If Love relaxed the reins
All things that now keep peace
Would wage continual war
The fabric to destroy
Which unity has formed
with motions beautiful. [...] 
O happy race of men
If Love who rules the sky
Could rule your hearts as well (II.8)!

Another example that should be mentioned, the prayer *O qui perpetua*, is the centre of the work. Dronke argues that this prayer contains the “poetic secret, the way in which Boethius and Philosophia are the same and not the same.” His point is that in this prayer Philosophy begins alone but the ending calls for personal pronouns, either “my” or “our” minds, and an obvious unity between the two transpires in this request.

The beginning of the poem contains assertions that Boethius can assent to intellectually, but as it continues, by the end the author himself is begging to actually know it and feel it on a personal level. The poetic prayer says, even accomplishes, what prose cannot, a unification of Philosophy and Boethius, a “personal synthesis.”

In might be added that it is this poetic use of prayer that also sheds light on the relationship of poetry and philosophy in Boethius. Aristotle made a sharp distinction between dialectic and poetry in regards to prayer in *De Interpretatione*:

Yet every sentence is not a proposition; only such are propositions as have in them either truth or falsity. Thus a prayer is a sentence, but is neither true nor false.

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254 Dronke, *Verse with Prose*, 45.
255 Ibid., 45.
Let us therefore dismiss all other types of sentence but the proposition, for this last concerns our present inquiry, whereas the investigation of the others belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or of poetry (*De Interpretatione* 1.4).

Here Aristotle very clearly declares that prayer does not belong to dialectic, that it cannot be evaluated with regards to truth or falsity, and thus belongs to rhetoric or poetry. Such a harsh evaluation of prayer no doubt was in regards to the idea of prayer as an invocation, or a request of a deity and thus belonging to the hortatory subjunctive and other moods of speech rather than the indicative mode proper to dialectic and philosophy.

In reading the *Consolation of Philosophy*, however, one is struck by how obviously Boethius ignores this interpretation of prayer. The beginning of *O qui perpetua* is a series of sentences and propositions regarding the truth of God, and thus can dialectically be analyzed as true or false. For example Boethius declares “All things Thou bringest forth from Thy high archetype (*Consolation*, Bk. III.9).” Such a proposition is either true or false, and may be utilized in dialectical argumentation, and even syllogistic demonstration. Prayer, and poetry for that matter, is not as distinct from dialectic as Aristotle has declared, since it may contain propositional material. This observation is of fundamental importance for understanding Anselm, as he too will view poetic prayer as a valid medium for logical argumentation. As such, the example of Boethius will prove that an Aristotelian logician may put forth propositional truth in prayerful poetry, and Anselm will take this a step further, crafting his philosophical masterpiece, the *Proslogion*, entirely as a poetic/dialectic prayer.

Furthermore, as articulated in the poetic analytic, the poetic prayer is not just emotional or beautiful, it is necessary in the attainment of truth. Just as Plato had prayed, Boethius acknowledges that prayer helps in “laying the proper foundation (III.9).”
Philosophy argues that in order to obtain truth, the poetic prayer must go forth. This observation is supported by Curley’s assertion that the *Consolation* demonstrates a cognitive hierarchy of sensation, imagination, reason, and intellect.\(^{256}\) Poetry aids philosophy in each step, by helping the prisoner move from the emotions that trap him in the material world (Book I) to imagination, and from imagination (Book II) into reason, and from reason (Books III and IV) via prayer into the divine realm of intellect (Book V). Each leap includes the realm below it, and poetry maintains a place throughout. In this way, Boethius provides a roadmap to Enlightenment in which prayer, and its attendant, poetry, are an indispensible part of receiving the illumination of God in answering the philosophical questions that trouble humanity.

In conclusion, Boethius’ technique of balancing logical argumentation with poetic expression is adopted by Anselm in the *Proslogion*, albeit with significant alteration. The uses of poetry and prose in Boethius’ prosimetrum *De Consolatione* are clearly demarcated based upon metrical or non-metrical language. The poetry of Anselm’s day uses rhyme and alliteration and repetition, which makes distinguishing the so-called “poetic” passages from the “philosophic” that much more difficult. Furthermore, since Anselm did not utilize the categories of poetry and philosophy, nor their opposition, to the same extent, his work will be more unified because of it. Yet, although Anselm will not employ the intricate metrical verse of Boethius, he does combine the poetic genre he had developed in his *Prayers and Meditations* with the recondite logic displayed in the plainer style of the *Monologion* to create an original hybrid genre, a form of prosimetrum. Undoubtedly influenced by the *Consolation*, Anselm, however, can be credited with making the various poetic sections of the *Proslogion* fit more smoothly with his logical

\(^{256}\) Curley, “How to Read,” 237-239.
explorations than the sharp juxtaposition employed by Boethius, thus more genuinely flowing in and out of poetic and philosophic modes and mutually reinforcing them thereby. The contiguity between these modes points to the unity both of language itself and the doxological purpose to which he turns it. The result is a more fluid and holistic piece, enabling the mind to follow Anselm’s emotional and intellectual highs and lows and inculcating the truth he presents that much more easily. Anselm’s *Proslogion* however would be a unique instance of prosimetrum as he blends poetry and prose, argument and adornment, seamlessly. Still, though he may go about it differently, Anselm is assuredly indebted to Boethius’ employment of both philosophic and poetic modes, to the extent that it can be maintained of Anselm, like his martyred predecessor, that, “The philosopher was a poet.”

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257 Baldwin, 101.
2.3 AUGUSTINIAN CHRISTIAN RHETORIC

Of all the Church Fathers, the one whose work most impressed Anselm was Augustine. Not only was he Anselm’s foremost theological influence outside of Scripture, he was a chief philosophical and poetical authority as well. In fact, Augustine served as a major conduit of the entire liberal arts tradition itself to any eleventh century monastic student. In particular De Doctrina Christiana would shape the monastic learning of the entire medieval period. This work is primarily a manual on the study of Scripture, but since the holy book is an instance of linguistic activity, Augustine delves into the complexities of language with great rigour, providing one of the most comprehensive works on the relationship of philosophy to poetry found in the ancient (if not contemporary) world. In order to understand Anselm’s mindset it is important therefore to first explore Augustine through a poetic/dialectic analytic.

2.3.1 Poetic Analytics

Poetry is a topic to which Augustine directs a considerable amount of attention. De Musica, despite its misleading title, is actually a dialogue on poetry, and, for the first five books, he monotonously explicates the rules determining syllabic metre in Latin poetry.258 The sixth and final book is the most famous, as it elucidates a neo-Platonic, almost Pythagorean, picture of the universe itself as a harmony of numbers with a corresponding epistemology. Of importance in this work on poetry is the fact that he is working primarily with the sonic syllables of language, which were also the building blocks of grammar, further solidifying poetry’s affiliation with the first discipline of the

trivium. Poetry, like music, is concerned with sound, as metric verse regulates the rhythm of the sound of each syllable as it hits the ear, producing pleasure. To be sure, Augustine is always dubious about pleasure as it can often lead away from God if pursued for its own sake instead of for further knowledge and experience of the divine. For example, in The Confessions, Augustine admits his weakness for the love of music when hearing the Psalms and church hymns, yet he abjures such use of the pleasure of sound as an end in itself rather than as a means to contemplating God. He cannot condone the outlawing of music in the Church, however, despite this danger, because it is conversely true that “through the pleasure afforded the ears the weaker mind may rise to feelings of devotion (Confessions, Bk. 10, Ch. 33).”

Such a half-hearted approbation of the pleasure found in the musical sound of words in poetry must be considered in light of the fact that Augustine had experienced for himself the spiritual harm that can accompany beauteous words. He echoes Plato’s critique of the poetic corpus on the grounds that they glorify negative morals (Confessions, Bk. I., Ch. 13; City of God, Bk. IV, Ch. 27) and teach lies about theological matters (Confessions, Bk. I., Chs. 16-17; City of God Bk. IV, Chs. 26-27). Anselm, as we have seen, upholds a similar critique of the immorality of Virgil. Yet Augustine is more vehement, often referring to philosophical and theological positions presented in Latin literature with the contemptuous terms translated “poetic fictions”, “poetic figments”, or “poetic falsehood” (Confessions, Bk. I, Chs. 13, 17; City of God, Bk. IV, Ch. 10; Bk. XVIII, Chs. 15, 16; De Cura Pro Mortuis, 3). Augustine was undoubtedly much more a man of the world than Anselm, and as such saw the detrimental effects of poetry first hand.
Despite Augustine’s pointed cautioning of the dangers of poetry, the fact that he composed a manual in versification such as *De Musica* indicates that he saw a positive role for poetics in the expression of genuine Christian faith. Indeed, just as the “spoiling of the Egyptians (Bk. II, Ch. 40)” indicated that a Christian could in good conscience utilize the art of dialectic, in *De Doctrina Christiana*, he utilizes the principle to establish that all the tools available to the rhetor are also appropriate for use by the faithful. For, although citing again the danger that eloquence might as easily persuade a person to accept a lie as a truthful statement, he wisely points out that “it is not the faculty itself that is to be blamed, but the perversity of those who put it to a bad use (Bk. II, Ch. 36).”

The fourth and final book of *De Doctrina Christiana* is concerned with how a student might actually present the truth discovered in implementing the hermeneutical principles described in the preceding three books. The goal is to properly use one’s knowledge of grammar to convey truth when speaking about Scripture. He declares that, since rhetoric can be utilized to enforce either truth or falsehood, it cannot be argued that those who wish to use eloquence to defend and promulgate the divine realities are wrong, thereby allowing those with devilish ends to employ them uncontested (Bk. IV, Ch. 2). Augustine had declared earlier in the work that to understand the meaning of a text, one must procure knowledge of the literary tropes employed by the holy writers (Bk. III, Ch. 29); it appears that he would also recommend proficiency in utilizing these same tropes when presenting such meanings to an audience. Still, he is adamant that his work is not attempting to teach the rudiments of rhetoric, since they can be found elsewhere through the liberal arts; instead he is exploring the relationship of rhetoric to the exposition of Scripture (Bk. IV, Ch. 1). Augustine will advise, however, that one not learn rhetoric
merely through textbooks but rather through imbibing the most excellent examples by voracious reading and imitation (Bk. IV, Ch. 3). Although the growing bodies of ecclesiastical literature, especially the Fathers, are appropriate sources for such a “hands on” rhetorical education, the holy canon is heralded as the supreme exemplar of elegance. Consequently, a detailed survey of eloquence as evidenced by both Paul and the prophets is provided (Bk. IV, Ch. 7). In this apology for rhetoric then, poetics, in so far as it shares the very same figures of speech and thought in Scripture’s arsenal, is established as a vital aspect of any Christian literary endeavour.

Furthermore, Augustine served to influence Anselm through the poetic tendency of his own writing. Although he mentions the victories to be of no account, we must take seriously Augustine’s own indications that his contemporaries acknowledged him as a formidable poet, winning multiple prizes in poetic and rhetorical competitions (Confessions, Bk I, Ch. 17; Bk. IV, Ch. 1). One aspect of this master rhetor’s style must be addressed in particular; his use of multi-syllabic rhyme. Augustine directly addresses the phenomenon of rhyme when he discusses the Scriptures’ lack of “harmonious endings [homeoteleuton]”, or the rhyme produced by utilizing identical or similar case-endings, which characterizes Latin eloquence. He believes that the writers of Scripture may have deliberately avoided rhyme and more refined meter, although he is unsure, and assures the reader that in addition to displaying the other poetic ornaments extolled by rhetoricians, the Biblical writings have their own unique beauty which is lacking in the Latin poets. He does not fault them for the lack of harmonious endings, of course, even though “the same order of words does not run very harmoniously even in the original tongue.” Still, when discussing his own preferred style, he will say: “while I do not in
my own speech, however modestly I think it done, neglect these harmonious endings, [I] am just as well pleased to find them in the sacred authors very rarely (De Doctrina Christiana, Bk. IV, Ch. 20).” He will attribute this harmony of rhyme to “musical training”, which would link rhyme to his own manual on musical harmony, De Musica. Anselm most likely received his own style in part from reading this tract, but more importantly by observing Augustine as a writer and imbibing this ubiquitous use of harmonious endings.

Augustine’s rhyming is not the simple end-line rhymes that were so commonplace in English poetry for centuries, but is a rather more complex interlocking of words and sounds that can be described as multi-syllabic. Multi-syllabic rhyming has not played a major compositional role in English poetry until the recent rise of hiphop and its evolution of rhyme, specifically in the 1990s. The dependence of Anselm’s earliest writings especially, upon the Augustinian method of using carefully molded, multi-syllabic rhyming, together with assonant and antithetical sentences, is demonstrated quite thoroughly by R. W. Southern in his now classic biography of Anselm.259 In fact, Anselm’s rhyming structures reflect a complex interlacing of rhymes and assonance that can only be properly compared to those of Augustine in the entire Christian theological corpus. Anselm’s dependence upon his predecessor’s rhetorical devices and style is immediately demonstrated by reiterating Southern’s examples from the Latin text of both authors:

Deus igitur est pater rerum creatarum,
Et Maria mater rerum recreatarum.
Deus est pater constitutionis omnium,
Et Maria est mater restitutionis omnium.

The techniques utilized by Anselm in the first passage, including rhyme, assonance, and parallelism, are clearly dependent upon those of Augustine, exemplified in the second passage, more than six hundred years earlier. The parallel number of syllables between a given line and the subsequent line is quite astonishing, requiring a great deal of poetic ability, especially while still maintaining the high standard of truth in meaning to which each man subjected his words. It is through his detailed study of Augustine, the master rhetor, that Anselm rises into the elite circle of elegant Latinists from the Middle Ages. It would appear that he took to heart Augustine’s contestation that “the ear would no doubt be gratified with a more harmonious ending (De Doctrina Christiana, Bk. IV, Ch. 20).”

2.3.2 Dialectic Analytics

In terms of philosophical import, this influence of Augustine is so ubiquitous that, in her discussion of Anselm’s metaphysics and epistemology, Katherin Rogers employs as a principle of her methodology that “Anselm, in content if not in methodology, usually follows St. Augustine.” She rightly acknowledges that the Aristotelian logic inherited from Boethius is of major importance in defining Anselm’s philosophical method, but as

260 Anselm, “Prayer to Saint Mary”, as cited in Southern, A Portrait, 75.
far as his philosophical content is concerned, it is also right to stress Augustine as his primary inspiration. The preface to the *Monologion* says as much concerning its own content’s dependence upon *De Trinitate*, and his name is explicitly mentioned six times, only two less than Aristotle. Since he seldom explicitly cites a source for a thought, even if directly quoting it, these six occurrences indicate the self-conscious Augustinian leanings of much of Anselm’s philosophical perspective.

Although Augustine has come to be remembered more as a rhetorician than a logician, he did write a treatise devoted solely to the topic entitled *De Dialectica*. In it, he helps to further distinguish the roles played by grammar and dialectic by delineating how they relate to their object, namely language:

Thus, as we had just begun to say, every word has sound. But sound (*quod sonat*) has nothing to do with dialectic. It is a question of the sound of a word when we investigate or pay attention to how vowels are softened in their disposition or how they lose hiatus when they come together, likewise, how consonants cluster by interposition or are made harsh by clustering, and how many or what kind of syllables (a word) consists of, where the poetic rhythm and accent, a matter for the ears of the grammarian alone, are treated. But when there is dispute concerning these things, that is not beyond dialectic. For it is the science of disputing (*De Dialectica*, V).

Grammar is concerned with the sounds of words, the syllables, the signs themselves, the building blocks, so to speak, of language. This passage indicates that poetic devices such as rhyme or metre, which depend upon syllables of sound, are to Augustine a matter of grammar. Dialectic, in distinction, is concerned primarily with meaning, disputing what the sounds refer to as signs.

That Augustine’s distinction of grammar from dialectic on the grounds of sound versus referent should so happily fit many modern linguistic paradigms of “sign” and

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“signified” is hardly surprising given that Augustine, through *De Doctrina Christiana*, is one of the more significant ancient contributors to the studies of both semiotics and hermeneutics as well as rhetoric and poetics. Philosophy is brought into play early in that work, as it begins with Augustine asserting that God is Wisdom (Bk. I, Chs. 8-9), in effect making all true philosophy essentially theology by declaring the philosopher, as the lover of wisdom, thereby lover of God.\(^{264}\) Book II includes the aforementioned discussion of semiology, where Augustine articulates a considerably detailed phenomenology of language.\(^{265}\) Augustine also outlines his philosophical methodology in his seven steps to wisdom: “first, fear; second, piety; third, knowledge; fourth, resolution; fifth, counsel; sixth, purification of heart; seventh, stop or termination, wisdom (Bk. II, Ch. 7).” In Chapter 40, Augustine makes his famous argument from Exodus of “spoiling the Egyptians” in order to legitimize the use of the arts and sciences already developed by the pagan authors. Just as the Hebrews were commanded by God to take the gold and silver objects and clothing and put them to use for the purposes of God, so the Christian may use any knowledge gained from exterior sources as long as it is in conformity with the teachings of Scripture. It is interesting that Augustine refers specifically to the philosophers in this passage, and particularly to the Platonists, and his own use of these sources attest to how important he considers this principle in theological argumentation.

In this same book, defending the use of secular philosophy in interpreting Scripture and seeking to understand God better, Augustine explicitly deals with the use of

\(^{264}\) Shortly after, Augustine will declare Wisdom to have become incarnate in Jesus Christ (Bk. I, Chapters 11-14), thus further declaring the true philosopher to be specifically Christian.

\(^{265}\) For an enlightening study of Augustine’s phenomenology of language, especially in its relation to the recent philosophical issue of words as violence see James K. A. Smith, *Speech and Theology: Language and the logic of incarnation* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
dialectics, what he calls “the science of reasoning (Bk. II, Chs. 31-35).” Augustine gives a brief adumbration of the rudiments of syllogistic logic, explaining how one arrives at valid conclusions and various fallacies that can plague a given line of reasoning. There is even a discussion of what would now be described as the inductive and deductive modes of reasoning (Bk. II, Ch. 34). A unique feature in his presentation is his use of Scripture itself to demonstrate the dangerous conclusions that can be arrived at when one validly reasons from an untrue proposition. Furthermore, the Bishop of Hippo also makes the audacious claim that “the validity of logical sequences is not a thing devised by men, but is observed and noted by them that they may be able to learn and teach it; for it exists eternally in the reason of things, and has its origin with God (Bk. II, Ch. 32).” Valid logical reasoning is not a human creation, but instead the discovery of the very reason of God, pointing to a participatory notion of truth echoed in Anselm’s own treatise On Truth. In this Neo-Platonic worldview, God is Truth, and any true statement derives its validity ultimately from the eternal God. Such a perspective gives to the philosophic enterprise a divine dignity, making the use of reason in search for truth not only permissible but also pressing.

Furthermore, Augustine does offer one methodological principle that Anselm makes foundational to dealing with philosophical quandaries - that hermeneutical and logical problems arise from the ambiguity of signs (De Doctrina Christiana, Bk. 2, Chs. 10, 12; De Dialectica VII-X). De Grammatico, Anselm’s own manual on dialectic, is

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266 Augustine uses 1 Cor. 15:12-14 as an example: “But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”

267 For an excellent discussion of Augustine’s doctrine of participation and its adherence to by Anselm see Rogers, Neo-platonic Metaphysics, 91-112.
concerned solely with such ambiguities. According to Desmond Paul Henry, resolving these ambiguities by distinguishing between the everyday and technical use of language is a method Anselm employs routinely and effectively throughout his philosophical works.268

Finally, it is important to mention that it is likely that Anselm is indebted to Augustine for even his most original contribution to the history of philosophy, his development of the single argument from the phrase *quo nihil maius cogitari possit* [that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought]. As Roberts pointed out, the concept of God as that than which nothing greater could be conceived is dependent upon Augustine’s discussion under the title “What All Men Understand by the Term God.”269 The Bishop of Hippo states “For when the one supreme God of gods is thought of, even by those who believe that there are other gods, and who call them by that name, and worship them as gods, their thought takes the form of an endeavor to reach the conception of a nature, than which nothing more excellent or more exalted exists (*De Doctrina Christiana*, Bk 2, Ch. 7).” Here it becomes clear that even Anselm’s greatest work of philosophy, the *Proslogion*, is ultimately standing on the phraseology of his master Augustine. The philosophy of Augustine is the philosophy of Anselm.

Thus, the pursuit of philosophy is an entirely Augustinian tradition, which the middle ages upheld and honoured. The use of dialectic in regards to Scripture was not only permissible, but vital, because acquiring any form of knowledge was ultimately aimed at achieving Wisdom, Truth, God himself. With this Augustinian perspective in

place, Anselm was motivated to utilize his reasoning capabilities to their full potential, in hopes of better relating to the God of Truth.

**2.3.3 Poetic/Dialectic Synthetics**

If Augustine was so intent on the topics of philosophy and poetry, we should not be surprised to discover that he also spent considerable space dealing with how these two realms relate to one another. To begin, let us revisit what Augustine held to be constitutive of the arts of rhetoric and dialectic:

This art [rhetoric/eloquence], however, when it is learnt, is not to be used so much for ascertaining the meaning as for setting forth the meaning when it is ascertained. But the art previously spoken of [dialectic/wisdom], which deals with inferences, and definitions, and divisions, is of the greatest assistance in the discovery of the meaning (*De Doctrina Christiana* Bk. IV, Ch. 37.55).

What might be considered to be of philosophic concern (i.e. dialectic or the love of wisdom) is designed to discover meaning, while poetic concerns (i.e. rhetoric and eloquence) were established to present said meaning persuasively. Does Augustine view one function as more important than the other? As might be expected, he asserts that wisdom is in all cases to be held primary to eloquence, an assertion he defends by referencing the acknowledgment of the rhetorical tradition itself that, while wisdom without eloquence can be of little service in public affairs, eloquence without wisdom can actually be injurious (Bk. IV, Ch. 5). If not directly harmful, an over-emphasis on eloquence can lead to empty speech that is ultimately worthless. Augustine says that this type of speech, which “aims at verbal ornamentation more than is consistent with seriousness of purpose, is also called sophistical (Bk. II, Ch. 31).” This Church Father would be disdainful of a poet who grasps fervently to the common modernist motto “art for art’s sake.” Instead, he advises that such an obsession with words only in and of
themselves is indicative of a lack of intelligence, saying, “And it is one of the distinctive features of good intellects not to love words, but the truth in words (Book IV, Ch. 11.26).”

Despite this seeming prioritizing of truth over beauty in literary construction, Augustine is not shy to insist that eloquence, when accompanied by wisdom, is of vital importance, and that “assuredly he will prove of greater service if he can do both (Bk. IV, Ch. 5).” He then points again to the Scriptures as the apotheosis of literature in that they precisely achieve this synthesis of eloquence with wisdom (Bk. IV, Ch. 6). To aid the reader in coming to an understanding of how such a confluence of poetic and philosophic aspects can be obtained, Augustine, over the course of many chapters, presents three distinct yet kindred triads: 1) the Ciceronian model of the aims of discourse as being teaching, delighting, and to moving an audience (Bk. IV, Ch. 12); 2) the classic threefold schemata delineating the formal styles of speech as subdued, temperate, and majestic (Bk. IV, Ch. 17); and 3) the characteristics desired in all three aforementioned styles of verbal expression as those of perspicuity, beauty, and persuasiveness (Bk. IV, Ch. 26).

Augustine puts these three paradigms to great use, articulating how we are to judge each and every sentence according to eloquence and wisdom, or in modern parlance, according to poetic and philosophic aspects. Once again, he will argue that although all three aims of the orator must not be neglected, teaching remains the most essential (Bk. IV, Ch. 12). Perspicuity, as a result, is likewise the most important characteristic in any form of speech, as teaching is “making clear what was obscure (Bk. IV, Chs. 10-11).” However, even the clearest teaching will be of little benefit without a polished style, except to those who are extremely keen (Bk. IV, Ch. 11). Augustine does
not propose perspicuity, beauty, and persuasiveness as characteristics of different types of speech to the exclusion of others, but instead emphasizes their importance in all use of language. That being said, however, each of the three styles can be identified largely by which characteristic is predominant as its intention. The subdued style, then, is marked by the criterion of perspicuity and a didactic purpose, so that “when knotty questions turn up for solution, accuracy of distinction is required, and this naturally demands the subdued style (Bk. IV, 23.52).” This indicates that in dialectical passages, those concerned with the abstruse matters of philosophy, the subdued style is to be preferred, although of course not to the complete neglect of matters of beauty and persuasiveness. The temperate style is concerned primarily with pleasing by beauty of style, through praise or blame, and is marked by a particular concern with beauty in order to delight the reader, although this also requires that one not implement a gaudy or over-ornamental language (Bk. IV, Ch. 25). The majestic style attends itself to persuasiveness with the motive of moving the audience to undertake the action or accept the doctrine being recommended. In short, the three styles of subdued, temperate, and majestic are dedicated to intellectual, aesthetic, and volitional emphases respectively.

Augustine is careful to encourage the writer and speaker to wield a variety of styles, and he discusses the many ways in which the styles can complement each other in a given work, identifying the use of only one style in isolation as a great faux pas in composition (Bk. IV, Chs. 22-23). Ideally, a Christian author will be able to intermingle the various styles and attend to the three aims of the orator by skillfully employing the three desirable characteristics of all allocution. What is important to realize is that Augustine’s schemata acknowledges that every single linguistic construct, by its very
nature, can be analyzed on the grounds of truth, beauty, and motive (i.e. all sentences contain a philosophic, poetic, and affective dimension). We distinguish different modes of speech only on the degree to which they emphasize a particular aspect of language, not as completely discrete and unrelated to the other modes. Philosophy then stresses the property of veracity, while poetic, confused as it is with rhetoric, is today seen to be concerned with the aesthetic and emotive quality of a literary passage.

What becomes interesting is Augustine’s admission that such categories invariably overlap. For instance, the skillful ordering of sound is undoubtedly the domain of poetry as he makes clear in *De Musica*, saying, “‘What is it we love in sensible harmony?’ Nothing but a sort of equality and equally measured intervals, isn’t it so (*De Musica*, Bk. 6, Ch. 10)?” This, however, leads to the question of equality and equally measured intervals of thought. In the Psalms, for example, Hebrew parallelism gains its strength more by the aesthetic balancing and counterbalancing of ideas than sound, and a lot of poetry is characterized more by the patterning of various images than the sounds or visibility of the words themselves. Does not logic, an art it must be remembered, also thrive by the careful balancing of ideas? Similarly, if we were to deny to poetry an ability to arrive at truth, or to unveil truth, as Heidegger would have it, we would be flying in the face of the major premise that has girded traditional literary studies for centuries.

In his seminal study *Art and Scholasticism*, Jacques Maritain argues that logic is ultimately concerned with producing a linguistic work, and is therefore an artistic endeavour, with its own sort of beauty.\(^\text{270}\) Likewise, “in every art there is as it were a

vivid experience of Logic.” This issue is directly addressed by Augustine when he declares that even the subdued style can provoke applause that can only be explained by pointing to “the pleasure that truth so irresistibly established, and so victoriously defended, naturally affords (Bk. IV, Ch. 26).” Truth itself can cause pleasure as beauty does; the skillful balancing of propositions in logic maintains its own type of aesthetic delight.

Perhaps Augustine provides these three related heuristic systems in order to emphasize that in the end language is unified in and of itself, and the useful distinctions we make are more for the purpose of clarifying its different aspects by viewing it from diverse angles. For this reason, he will insist that all three characteristics are present in every human utterance; the question is of degree. Similarly, the categories of “poetry” and “philosophy” are helpful for our own perusal of language use as long as we do not assert the distinction as constitutive of language itself, which, grounded in God, is mysteriously unified. This perspective is revolutionary in that it forces us to admit that every philosophical work has a degree of poetic value, while every poem can also be judged for its philosophic content. It is in the penumbra between the two that the mysteries of language hide.

Augustine’s semiological schema is the guide through which Anselm learned to view what he believed to be the divinely given phenomenon of language. Through ingesting the works of this Carthaginian rhetorician, Anselm became a master of the Latin language, and it apparently influenced him to view the poetic and dialectic elements of language as unified in the nature of God.

271 Ibid., 40.
Anselm learned much of his style by the method Augustine advised, saturating himself in a gifted Church Father, this time the venerable Bishop of Hippo himself. As discussed earlier, Anselm adopted the rhyming rhythmic prose that characterizes Augustine’s writing, and his *Confessions* and *Sermons* in particular served as concrete examples of how one might go about the business of literature without slighting either wisdom or eloquence. Augustine certainly found a unique pleasure in such a miscenegenation of the poetry and philosophy, as evidenced in his reflections upon an Ambrosian hymn: “And so that verse proposed by us, *Deus creator omnium,* sounds with the harmony of number not only to the ears, but even more is most pleasing in truth and wholeness to the soul’s sentiment.”272 The most important products of language will combine the sound of harmony with the clarity of truth. For, these various modes of language are to find their ultimate end, fulfillment, and reconciliation in doxology. There can be no limit put on praise, for language will never exhaust the requirement to glorify God.273 Anselm takes his master’s words to heart, and in the *Proslogion* especially, creates a fusion of the poetic and philosophic dimensions of language that Augustine himself would have applauded for its display of the beauty of reason and the reason of beauty.274

Anselm adopts the unique first person address of God that Augustine pioneers in his *Confessions*. In this respect, the *Confessions* and *Proslogion* are the two most

272 Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk. 6, Ch. 17.
273 “But when we come to praise God, either in Himself, or in His works, what a field for beauty and splendor of language opens up before man, who can task his powers to the utmost in praising Him whom no one can adequately praise, though there is no one who does not praise Him in some measure! (Bk. IV, Ch. 19)” The doxological and liturgical fulfillment of philosophical language and language in general is explored at length in Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On The Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998).
important philosophical works in Western history that take the explicitly doxological form of prayer. It will be argued later that there is indeed a liturgical dimension and function to the *Proslogion*. This Augustinian move of uniting prayer to philosophy in writing provides Anselm with an opportunity to utilize his considerable poetic skill, developed while penning his earlier *Prayers and Meditations*, in conjunction with the logical rigour displayed in *De Grammatico* and the *Monologion*. The relationship between the literary form of the *Proslogion* as meditative prayer and it’s logical content has been too often neglected. Richard Miller argues,

> Despite certain modifications of the prayer form in the *Proslogion*; namely its length and the level of inclusion of logical argument within it, it basically has all the elements of his other prayers. These include a withdrawal into solitude, both of place and mind in order to free the person for God, a rousing of the mind to the contemplation of God.

In the *Proslogion* the poetic prayers bear directly on the logical argument and actually work in conjunction with it. It must be remembered that Anselm’s meditations were expected to be heard, read aloud, and his poetic accomplishments would serve as mnemonic devices to further the theurgic aim of purifying the mind, even a small amount, of the disastrous effects of the fall. Furthermore, we find Anselm following Augustine’s advice of using different styles for different intents and mingling them together artfully. For example, in the opening chapter, the most majestic style possible is used to declare both the *acedia* and the *dorville* he feels in his human fallenness, as well as the great heights of delight to which he rises when contemplating the depths of the Godhead. The subdued style is then stringently employed in the second chapter, which

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276 Richard Miller, 74.
deals with his complicated grammatical argument for the existence of God, a matter most clearly in need of perspicuity.

The works of Augustine did not simply provide Anselm with a theoretical construct concerning the relationship of poetry to philosophy, but they also provided a concrete example of how to employ such a theory. For example, Augustine’s neglected poetic polemic work *Psalm Against the Donatists (Psalmus contra partem Donati)* is an example of a work of art also being an argument. The polemic psalmic text was meant for oral appreciation, and the dense rhymes were an example of poetic and dialectic good be utilized together in a doxological context. The idea of utilizing the poetic form of the *Psalms*, enhanced with rhyming Latin poetry, for the purpose of persuasive argument is something Augustine fleshed out concretely and which Anselm would pick up and carry farther in the *Proslogion*.

These observations serve as precursory glances into the implications of this historical study for understanding the relationship of philosophy and poetry as exemplified in Anselm’s writing. A more detailed exegesis of the *Proslogion* will be necessary to truly plumb the depths of his poetic-philosophical synergy. What can be concluded, is that Augustine provided both a theoretical framework and a concrete example of theological writing that combined poetic and philosophic elements into a unified linguistic work.

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2.4 ANSELM AND PSALMS: HOLY SCRIPTURE AND LITURGY

The influence of the monastic life on St. Anselm is difficult to overestimate.278 Even after his election to the Archbishopric, he continued to think of himself primarily as a monk, writing, “Brother Anselm, by profession and at heart a monk of Bec, by God’s direction called archbishop of Canterbury.”279 Further evidence of the importance of his monastic vows for his own self-understanding is found in his Prayer to Benedict, where he repeatedly refers to himself as a monk, a disciple of Benedict, his master, who took up “the tonsure and habit of profession.” He conclusively declares, “I profess myself a soldier, scholar, monk.”

The significance of this simple self-description, “monk”, for understanding Anselm’s worldview can be easily overlooked by philosophers and scholars who come to the Proslogion after working through centuries of philosophical engagement with the ontological argument. As a joyful subject of the Rule of St. Benedict, every hour of Anselm’s day was regulated, with a significant portion dedicated to the recitation and chanting of Psalms, participation in the liturgy, and readings from the Bible. Every moment of monastic life was intentionally shaped by the liturgical and devotional occupation to which they had been called. A typical day in the life of the monks at Bec would have involved eight scheduled “offices” (Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, Compline, and Nocturns) made up of chanting a collection of psalms, lessons,

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and prayers, as well as chapter Mass, spiritual instruction from the Abbott, and High Mass.\textsuperscript{280} In between these set hours, sleep and manual tasks had to be fit; any intellectual endeavours, such as the composition of treatises, would thus also have to be conducted in between these scheduled devotional times. Therefore, even though Anselm is rare amongst the greatest theologians in that he never wrote a commentary on any of the books of Scripture, this does not indicate a lack of respect or interest. Scripture was the centre of each day of Anselm’s life, and this is evidenced by the fact that his works are replete with allusions, quotations, and paraphrases of this holy book.

Thus, although the monasteries served as centres of learning, including the seven liberal arts, and are credited with the preservation of innumerable rare tomes of ancient learning, the life of a monk cannot be properly considered in dissociation from contemplation and worship. To understand how logic and poetry are related to Anselm, it thus becomes vital to remember his monastic context, and poetically and dialectically analyze the daily role of the psalms, hymns, and Scripture readings in his life.

2.4.1 Poetic Analytics

Poetry is plentiful in the Bible, comprising much of the wisdom literature and prophetic books, and especially the Psalms which Anselm experienced daily. As he imbibed the ancient hymns, the very rhythm and cadence that constituted their nature as poetry imprinted themselves upon him. As a result, Anselm’s own prayers resemble the balance of the Psalms, and he often interweaves quotations from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Psalms seamlessly into his works. Hebrew poetry did not rely on the metric counting of syllables, so crucial to the classical tradition, nor the structural

alliteration of the vernacular poetry emerging amongst the Germanic peoples. Instead it was characterized most significantly by the use of parallelism. The prevalence of parallelism was explored by Robert Lowth in his *Prælectiones de Sacra Poesi Hebraeorum*, where he referred to the poetic form as “dialecticus poetica.”

This device is what rhetoricians referred to as the *figurae verborum* of balance in Anselm’s own day. Yet this balance was not so much a balance of words but rather of thought. An introductory line usually introduces an idea followed by a second line that may repeat the same idea in different words (synonymous parallelism), describe an opposite idea (antithetical), expand the idea with a metaphor (emblematic), increase the tension of the idea for following lines until a crescendo is reached (climactic), or simply develop the original idea (synthetic). Such a compositional technique, although seemingly rudimentary, in fact gives the poet a great deal of room to genuinely express a wide variety of ideas and feelings which can often be lost when the lines are subjected to more rigorous metrical constraints.

Before continuing, it is necessary to investigate the Psalmody as it stood in Anselm’s day. The Latin Vulgate was the universal authorized version of sacred scripture in the monasteries of the West, a translation primarily by Jerome in the fifth century. The history of the Psalms in the Vulgate is interesting as Jerome is known to have composed at least three different versions. The first was a rushed edit of an existing translation of the Hebrew Psalter into Latin. This became the version used in the Roman liturgy and is often referred to as *Psalterium Romanum*. Jerome than undertook a second revision of the Old Latin text, this time consulting Origen’s recension of the

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Greek Septuagint found in the *Hexapla*. This second edition has become known as the *Psalterium Gallicanum*. A final edition of the Psalms was completed by Jerome, translated more directly from the Hebrew text, and known as the *Versio juxta Hebraicum*. Although this final edition was of great scholarly import, and was the version originally included in the Vulgate, it faced difficulty in being accepted as the Old Latin held strong in the liturgy. As a result, the original two editions of Jerome were preferred, with the *Psalterium Romanum* being utilized especially in Italy, and the *Psalterium Gallicanum* becoming the standard Western Psalter under Charlemagne, including its use in the canonical hours of monastic liturgy. As such the Psalms that were sung and memorized by Anselm were from the *Gallicanum*, which, it must be noted, contained an interesting use of rhythm and rhyme in conjunction with the *parallelismus membrorum* (“parallel members”).

Despite Augustine’s statements that the Scriptures did not contain *homeoteleuton* or “similar endings”, the Psalter is obviously an exception. Homeoteleuton was given as a poetic device in Rhetoric, and functions as a form of rhyme or near-rhyme. For the purposes of this study it will be referred to as rhyme although many accounts of rhyme require a stressed syllable, where as homeoteleuton is often the unstressed similar ending of a word. The Psalter was translated for liturgical and musical purposes, and even the Old Latin contains this form of ancient rhyme. It might even be conjectured that the reason Jerome’s Gallican Psalter was so popular was due to this poetic sensibility. Anselm, it will be argued, utilized a writing style that is heavily indebted to the poetry of the Psalter.
In order to help substantiate this claim, it is useful to investigate the Psalm that
Anselm claimed formed the impetus for his \textit{Proslogion} - where the fool says in his heart
there is no God - Psalm 13 in the Vulgate (Psalm 14 in many modern translations from
the Masoretic text). The Psalm’s text is rendered in poetic lines below, where repetition,
assonance, rhyme, and similar endings are highlighted using bold (following the example
of Southern), and instances of alliteration are highlighted by italicizing the first letter of
the word.

Psalm 13 (14)

1 \textit{In finem Psalmus David}
\textit{Dixit insipiens in corde suo non est Deus}
corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis
\textit{non est qui faciat bonum}
non est usque ad \textit{anum}

2 Dominus de caelo prospe\textit{xit} super filios \textit{hominum}
\textit{ut videat si est intelligens aut requirens Deum}

3 Omnes declinaverunt
\textit{simul inutiles facti sunt}
\textit{non est usque ad \textit{anum}}
sepulchrum patens est guttur \textit{eorum}
linguis \textit{suis} dolose agebant venenum \textit{aspidum}
\textit{sub labiis \textit{eorum quorum}}
os maledictione et amaritudine \textit{plenum}
est veloces \textit{pedes \textit{eorum}}
ad effundendum \textit{sanguinem}
\textit{contritio et infelicitas in viis \textit{eorum}}
et \textit{viam pacis non cognoverunt}
\textit{non est timor Dei ante oculos \textit{eorum}}

4 Nonne \textit{cognoscent omnes}
\textit{qui operantur iniquitatem}
\textit{qui devorant \textit{plebem meam}}
sicut escam \textit{panis}

5 Dominum non invocaverunt \textit{illic}
trepidaverunt timore
ubi \textit{non erat timor}

6 Quoniam Deus \textit{in} generatione iusta est
consilium \textit{inopis confudistis}
\textit{quoniam Dominus \textit{spes eius est}}

7 Quis \textit{dabit} ex Sion \textit{salutare Israel}
cum averterit Dominus captivitatem plebis suae
exultabit Iacob et laetabitur Israel

In short, analyzing this Psalm makes it immediately apparent that Latin rhythmical poetry of a high level is present. The translation continues the parallelism inherent to Hebrew poetry, reflecting the balance of thought and sentence, but the Latin itself is poetically arranged. This is evident in the line of verse 1: corrupti sunt et abominabiles facti sunt in studiis suis where the internal rhyme of ti sunt is followed by the alliteration and is rhyme of studiis suis. There is the obvious repetition of non est usque ad unum (vv. 1 and 3), each time deliberately rhyming with other um endings.

It is telling that when laid out in this format it appears that almost every line ends with a rhyme, showing the perfect balance of the translation, as each line also is a full idea. Many times the rhyme is internal rather than at the end, sometimes being balanced by a simple repeated word, as in the conclusion:

7 Quis dabit ex Sion salutare Israel
cum averterit Dominus captivitatem plebis suae
exultabit Iacob et laetabitur Israel

The repetition of the word Israel serves as a short inclusio, while Sion salutare is an alliteration in the first line. The it syllable serves to rhyme dabit, averterit, and exultabit at the end of the words, but is also present in captivitatem and laetabitur, with these final two words also sharing the syllable ta. Likewise the bit and bis bits of dabit and plebis are a clear case of assonance. The repetition of Dominus links this verse with verse 6 before it.

There is not the space to do a complete poetic analytic of even this single Psalm, but it is hoped the above serves to prove that the Psalter which Anselm sang daily as a monk, was replete with intricate uses of rhymes, similar endings, assonance, repetition,
phrasal balance, and alliteration. And these are just sonic and visual symmetries. Further analyses of the entire Psalter demonstrate various other poetic devices, including frequent repetition, anaphora, chiasmus, apostrophe, merrism, metonymy, synecdoche, hyperbole, euphemism, and paronomasia, among others.284 Furthermore, the Psalms are famous for their vivid imagery, using both simile and metaphor, and their tremendous range of emotion, including great despair, joy, anger, and thanksgiving. This biblical imagery, which influenced Anselm’s writing, is often borrowed and utilized throughout his work.285 The imagery and sound poetics combine to emotionally impact the reader and thus drive the author’s ideas and feelings home.286

Unique within Scripture for the fact that it is the only book entirely addressed directly to God in the first person, Psalms was a main influence on Anselm’s prayers and meditations, which stand out during his day for their emotional intensity. It is not surprising, having been so frequently exposed to the Psalms, that Anselm’s own devotional writings would display many of the same characteristics. The Prosligion and the Prayers in particular show a concentrated use of the repetition and doxological outbursts characteristic of the Psalms. Examples include the repeated uses of a quotation that is itself repetitious, such as Psalm 26:8, “I seek Your countenance, O Lord, Your countenance I seek (Prosligion, 1, 18)”. Another instance is the climatic use of “our joy may be complete” in the crescendo of the final chapter (Prosligion, 26). In fact, Anselm’s masterful concatenation of biblical texts can itself be viewed as a function of

284 Alter, 139-170.
285 Loughlin gives several examples of Anselm’s use of biblical imagery, Loughlin, 85.
286 Loughlin, 83. She writes: “The imagery of his metaphors arouses an emotional response, because the reader can visualize it, and also because it is often accompanied by characteristic sound patterns.”
poetry, used as it is to rouse the emotions of the reader. In short, the Bible serves as a major source for Anselm’s own poetic activity.

In tandem with the scripture itself, the Latin hymnody and liturgy, including the Eucharist, was an important poetic influence on Anselm. Although these liturgies were in turn suffused with the language of the Psalms, Anselm would have also encountered therein the developing trends in Latin hymnody, which reflected not only the traditional metric verse of the ancients but also a new rhythmic form of verse, one which depended less on strict syllable counts and more on accentual stress and rhyme. As we have seen, this poetic sensibility was present in the Latin Psalter itself, and was picked up by early Latin hymn-writers. Ambrose seems to be one of the first to utilize this new poetic sensibility, crafting hymns that would eventually take his name. Baldwin states that, “Ambrosian hymns are distinguished as rhythm and thus hymns use a form of verse distinct from metra.” Fortunatus develops complex double rhyme in his hymn Vexilla Regis, but rhyme was still slow to develop as compositional device.

The most important development of the accentual rhyming rhythm for the hymnody is the dawn of the sequences in the liturgy. Notker Balbulus is usually credited with the popularization of the sequences in the liturgy in the ninth century. He had difficulty memorizing the lengthy melodies that were to accompany the final extended vowel of the alleluia in the Mass. After seeing an antiphonary that set words to the diverse melodies in the alleluia, as a mnemonic device, Notker began to craft his own

287 Bede seems to be the first to explicitly acknowledge this “new poetic” as described in Baldwin, 110-116.
288 Ibid., 123. Ambrose is given credit as the originator of rhythm: “As Augustine redeemed rhetoric, so Ambrose transformed poetic, by new motives.”
289 Ibid., 112.
290 Ibid., 102.
verses which he called sequences. His *Liber Sequentiarum* consisted of 38 sequences, although largely irregular in metre and lacking rhyme. The sequences became popular and were continually developed so that by the eleventh century they were rhyming, rhythmical poems even arranged in strophes. At the beginning of the eleventh century, Fulbert of Chartres would compose his *Hymnus in pascha*, making regular and exact rhyme a consistent feature.

It is obvious then, that the hymnody was a major influence on the rise of stress-oriented rhythmical rhyming poetry, and that by Anselm’s time, this was the predominant form of poetic composition. This association of rhyme with the doxology of the liturgy undoubtedly shaped Anselm’s own use of the device. In any case, Anselm sees the *Proslogion* as a liturgical work which when properly engaged will help to rectify the scars of the fall on the human psyche (cf. Chapter 5). As such, both the Psalmody of the Vulgate, and the hymnody of the liturgy, excercised considerable influence upon Anselm as a writer, and especially as a poet.

### 2.4.2 Dialectic Analytics

Although today some might deride the philosophical import of the Bible, Anselm had a much different outlook. True, in the introduction to his *Monologion* Anselm makes the bold and unprecedented move of foregoing all spiritual authorities and proceeding to establish the truth of his theology upon “reason alone.” Lanfranc found that problematic, and advised the young monk to utilize proper authorities. Yet, Anselm himself did not see his philosophic method in opposition to the truth of Scripture. He explicitly

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292 Balnaves, 261-263.
establishes the authority of Scripture in all matters, as well as its relation to philosophy, saying, “we ought to accept as certain not only the things that we read in Holy Scripture but also the things that follow from them with logical necessity, with no other arguments to the contrary (On the Procession of the Holy Spirit, 11).” As such, a proposition of Scripture can be utilized as a certain premise for a syllogism whose conclusion must be accepted as undeniable. Anselm then, places complete faith in Holy Scripture, to the point that, if one can establish a position through logic that necessarily follows an assertion of Scripture, it ought to be accepted as certainly true.

For Anselm, philosophy and Scripture are not combatants but close acquaintances. Indeed, if philosophy is the “love of wisdom”, then Scripture’s declaration that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 1:7) becomes a foundational philosophic concept for this monk. In his understanding, the wisdom of Proverbs and the rest of sacred literature are the pinnacle of human understanding and thus philosophically sure. This does not mean, however, that there is no need for extra-biblical use of logic; Anselm sees a need to use reason to help us understand the very things in Scripture accepted as true by faith. He would agree with Lanfranc that logic is useful in exegeting and explicating the exceedingly veracious content of the Bible. The priority of faith still demands that Christians seek to understand that which they believe (Proslogion, 1). As discussed previously, Anselm learns from Augustine that dialectic is often needed to help explicate the thornier issues that are raised during reflection on the sacred writings. Indeed, Anselm learned from Augustine in De Doctrina Christiana that Paul himself demonstrates a great deal of dialectic acumen in his epistles, further
strengthening his conviction that logical reasoning, as a gift given by God at Creation, should be pursued vigorously in service of the faith.

In the daily recitation of the Psalms, as well as readings from other books of Scripture, Anselm was given the propositional material that he considered most authoritative in shaping his philosophical worldview. He wanted his thinking to always be defined, aligned and refined by the lines of Holy Writ. Upon deeper reflection it is surprising to what extent the prayer poetry of the Psalter alone, rather than other parts of Scripture, proffers a detailed philosophy. In regards to Metaphysics, Anselm learned from the Psalter that there is One Creator God, who made all things, and who controls the forces of Nature and even the events of human history (Ps. 147). He discovered that humanity was created by God, and that each human is formed in the womb, and yet the entire species has been infected by sin, which is a turning against the Creator.

Epistemologically speaking, the Psalter declares humanity “a little lower than the gods” and that one should depend upon reason when making judgments about another human being (Ps. 35:19, 38:19, 69:4). It states that the world was made through an intelligent design (Ps. 136:5) and that God’s knowledge knows no limit (Ps. 147:5). The Psalms differentiate animals like horses and mules, from the potential of humans for understanding (Ps. 32:9, 49:20). They also teach that humanity has the capacity and should attempt to speak wisdom and understanding (Ps. 49:3). The Psalms also declare that understanding begins by fearing the Lord, that God’s precepts lead to understanding (Ps. 110:11, 119:100,104,130,144), and offer many forms of proverbial wisdom. It also indicates by example that one should ask to receive understanding in prayer (Ps. 119:34,

294 All numbering of the Psalms in this section is according to the Masoretic text unless otherwise indicated by the Septuagint number in brackets.
Thoughts are important and can determine the character of a person (Ps. 10:4) or their mood (Ps. 13:2, 44:2). God’s thoughts are profound (Ps. 92:5) and he can even know the thoughts of a person (Ps. 94:11, 139:2). The mind of God is beyond the ability of humanity to comprehend (Ps. 139:17-18, 71:15).

In terms of axiology, the ethics of the Psalms is evident in the dualistic language of the righteous and the wicked. Evil begins in a lack of acknowledging God or his judgment (Ps. 10:13), and is evident in pride (Ps. 10:4), arrogance (Ps. 5:4), lying, (Ps. 5:6), bloodthirstiness (Ps. 5:6), violence (Ps. 11:5), scheming (Ps. 26:10), bribery (Ps. 26:10), malice and the abuse of fellow humans (Ps. 56:8). The good acts of the righteous include speaking truth (Ps. 15:2), praising of God (Ps. 31:1-2), rebuking evil (Ps. 141:5), humility (Ps. 149:4), generousity (Ps. 112:5), and justice (Ps. 112:5). God is the truly righteous one and no human is righteous before him (Ps. 143:2).

The aesthetics of the Psalms is also quite profound. God is spoken of as beautiful (Ps. 27:4) even “perfect in beauty” (Ps. 50:2). And God is praised by mentioning the beauty of the city on his holy mountain (Ps. 47:2). The bride of the king is enthralling and beautiful (Ps. 45:11) yet beauty is also known to fade (Ps. 37:20). The dwelling place of God is lovely and the heart of the Psalmist yearns and cries to see it (Ps. 84:1-2).

The preceding discussion is obviously incomplete, but it serves to make the point that the Psalms provided Anselm with a considerable amount of philosophical material. It offers insights in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. Even more importantly, it gives Anselm the lens for seeing all of these fields through God. The philosophic topics are always grounded in theology. As such, Anselm is steeped deeply in the philosophy of religion. As he trusts these sources unhesitatingly, they will give
him the basic framework upon which he builds his logical propositions. As of course, the whole of the Scripture is much larger and more diverse than the Psalter alone, it becomes obvious that the Hebrew and Christian canon is a vast source of philosophical material upon which Anselm could draw.

2.4.3 Poetic/Dialectic Synthetics

The relationship between the philosophy and poetry of the Bible for Anselm would be one of perfect concord. Truth, the desiderative of all logical reasoning, is found in every sentence of the Scriptures, including the poetic sections. As we saw, Augustine upholds Scripture as the model for all literary endeavours. Anselm’s own reverence for Scripture, not to mention Augustine, strongly argues a similar perspective. Furthermore, the Psalms are replete with calls to meditate on God, on His nature, Word, and activity. For Anselm, *meditatio* is the pinnacle of what we would call philosophy; it is the directing of the intellect towards the unitary Source of all thought, the active rumination upon the Truth borne out by reason.\(^{295}\) It is common knowledge that meditation is greatly aided by the mnemonic superiority of poetry, especially in the repetition that so profoundly characterizes the Psalms. For Anselm, there could only be one ultimate subject for such meditation - God. It is in answer to this pressing need for meditation that Anselm composes his prayers and meditations, as well as the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, and thus we find that a common motive for both his philosophic and literary output is doxology. The nature of Scripture as Anselm perceives it points to the

\(^{295}\) For a magnificent treatment of the role of *meditatio* in the Middle Ages see Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
contiguous nature of poetry and philosophy, and this confluence will be reflected in his own literary output.

Thus Anselm’s commitment to Scripture necessitates that poetry can indeed bear truth; in fact, in the Psalms, it prophetically bore witness to the incarnate Truth of Jesus Christ before time. Likewise, philosophy can indeed be beautiful. Indeed, the wisdom of God rings out in the daily harmonious monastic chanting of the Psalms at Bec. It is easy to imagine that Anselm at some point, while in the midst of composition, heard the words of the Psalmist echo in his mind: “My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer (Ps. 45:1).”

Perhaps St. Ambrose, in his *Explanation of the Psalms*, put it best when he wrote:

> What is more pleasing than a psalm? […] It is the voice of complete assent, the joy of freedom, a cry of happiness, the echo of gladness. It soothes the temper, distracts from care, lightens the burden of sorrow. It is a source of security at night, a lesson in wisdom by day. […] In a psalm instruction vies with beauty. We sing for pleasure. We learn for profit. What experience is not covered by a reading of the psalms?

Here Ambrose, the father of rhyme in the Latin Hymnody, states that the Psalms complete the Horatian ideal of pleasure and utility. Psalms give great pleasure, and yet they are a teaching mechanism. Instruction combines with beauty; philosophy joins poetry.

In living a life saturated in the Psalms, the eleventh century monk Anselm could not relegate them to one category or the other. The Psalms are poetry; the Psalms are philosophy. The Psalms are poetic/dialectic theology. And in his *imitatio* of the

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296 Ambrose, *Psalmum I ennarratio*, 1, 9, in PL 14, 924. English Translation found in *The Office of Readings, According to the Roman Rite (The Divine Office)* (International Commission on English in the Liturgy (1983), Saturday, Week 10, Ordinary Time.)
Psalmists’ method and their content, Anselm will create a work in the *Proslogion* that is likewise not so easily categorized.
Having situated Anselm in his monastic cultural milieu, and argued for his command of all the arts of the trivium, the relationship between poetry and philosophy remains to be demonstrated in his body of work. It is hoped that the major themes and purposes for the Anselmian literary programme as a whole will surface through an examination of the major divisions of his corpus. In particular, it is hoped that the pervasive themes of the pursuit of God and the proper role of reason therein, monastic and scholastic themes respectively, will become evident in the process. In order to clarify these themes we will examine material that falls under the categories of prayers, meditations, dialogues, and formal treatises. In this analysis of the writings of Anselm it becomes evident there is a unity between seemingly disparate works such as the prayers and treatises, on the basis of the category of monastic meditation. In meditation poetry and philosophy are both discernible throughout Anselm’s writing, and a unity of thought and technique can ultimately be discerned. In the following poetic/dialectic analytic evidence arises of the unity of Anselm’s poetic prayers and philosophical/theological treatises in monastic meditation.

3.1 Orationem Componerem: Poetic Analytics

Anselm’s poetic legacy is perhaps the most underdeveloped of all aspects of his writing. His name is even left off an exhaustive list of Latin authors of literature in The
In at least the last two centuries of Anselmian scholarship, he has been firmly entrenched as a philosopher, to the detriment of his merit as a poet and literary artist. More than this, Anselm is even singled out as a culprit in the decline of the refined rhymes of earlier Latin literature. Tatlock singles out Anselm as integral in the loss of a form of Middle Ages Romanticism at the hands of Rationalism where “The avowed preference of serious content to literary beauty wholly determined the mediaeval view of literature.” He argues that Medieval authors were marked most by “their disinclination to attach value to one’s own private feelings” and points to the most famous monk of Bec in this regard saying, “Anselm and Thomas Aquinas no less voiced and molded their age than Kant and Hegel theirs.” Continuing his pillory, Tatlock argues “Not only the culmination of the mediaeval education, the teaching of philosophy and theology, but the entire education system, was as hostile to romanticism as can well be imagined.” With this type of assessment, Anselm is lumped into some sort of Rationalism detached from emotion that is hardly borne out when reading his entire corpus. Sadly, most discussions of eleventh century poetry are noticeably lacking input from any serious analysis of his writings.

The picture of Anselm painted above is the one sketched historically by modern philosophers. Unfortunately, it is a one-sided vision, one that anachronistically distorts the complex personality that was Anselm of Canterbury. In an attempt to balance our account of the master logician, the poetic fringes of the monk’s work must be explored, specifically the once popular *Prayers and Meditations* that he penned for the private

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298 Tatlock, 299.
299 Ibid., 301.
300 Ibid., 301.
devotion of his benefactors. In this regard, Tatlock does see where the emotions of poetry can be found in this era, noting “Mediaeval religion (to touch it lightly), like vernacular literature and popular ethics, had its romantic side. Emotionalism from the eleventh century on culminated in the yearning love toward Mary.” Anselm, we shall discover, is instrumental in establishing this tradition of emotional Marian poetics in his prayers. Yet, Tatlock remains dismissive of even this expression of emotions declaring, “Most of them were assuredly not written by able and original men.” The intention of this analysis is to demonstrate the contrary; that as a poet, Anselm is both able and original.

With the possible exception of De Grammatico, the larger part of the prayers are the earliest of Anselm’s writings. As prayers, their purpose is quite obviously spiritual in orientation, and the author himself declares in the Preface to the collection that “The purpose of the prayers and meditations that follow is to stir up the mind of the reader to the love or fear of God, or to self-examination.” That these prayers are not to be read quickly or skimmed for logical information is obvious, and, in the occasional letters he attached when sending the collection to friends, he encourages “deep meditation”, “since that is what they are meant for.” The preface also indicates that the division of text into smaller parts is meant to aid this purpose. The result of such meditation is either love or fear of God, or, as he puts it in yet another letter, “love or contrition.” Indeed, it is more often the second of these pairs, fear and contrition, which appear to be the most probable result, as the prayers resound with anxious cries deploring the wretched state of the sinner and exploring the need for redemption.

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301 Ibid., 302.
302 Ibid., 302.
303 Prayers and Meditations, Preface, 89.
The prayers are most often addressed to saints, both scriptural and extra-biblical, although the collection begins with a prayer to God, then Christ, followed by the Holy Cross. An interesting feature of these prayers, however, is that, when despair reaches a crescendo, the author often seems to forget his human, albeit heavenly, audience and directly addresses God or the divine Christ, as if his position is so precarious that, despite the tremendous aid of the holy personage, only God can ultimately understand and thus heal his pain.

The language of the prayers is that of poetry, utilizing a rhyming prose and a plethora of rhetorical figures, such as parallelism, antithesis, climax, balance, and rhetorical questions.\(^{304}\) Southern points out that the style of the prayers displays an explicit debt to St. Augustine.\(^{305}\) Indeed, the very tone of the works, with their constant consternation with the sinful condition of humanity, is thoroughly Augustinian. To convey the severity of this situation, Anselm uses what Mary Carruthers identifies as “enargeia or vivid, sensuous word-painting,”\(^{306}\) thereby evoking graphic mental pictures through a bombardment of poetic imagery.\(^{307}\) The penitent is scared, shamed, and grieved into a state of compunction. The excessive emotionalism displayed in these works is obviously at odds with the cool detached aloofness characteristic of the logician, and indicates that Anselm’s natural temperament is ultimately monastic, a factor which will surface again and again in his less affective literary productions.

Let it be noted that the poetry that we have uncovered from Anselm has taken the form of prayer. This in itself is telling, in that the monk does not revel in the beauty of

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\(^{304}\) Ward, *Prayers and Meditations*, 57.


\(^{307}\) Ward, 58.
language for its own sake, but rather for the sake of devoting the mind in meditation to God. In the preface to his collection of *Prayers and Meditations*, as well as in several letters that accompanied copies of said prayers to fellow monks or patrons, Anselm specifically indicates, as we have noted, that their purpose is to stir the reader’s mind to love and fear God and to personal introspection. Poetry for Anselm is never an end in itself but a means to reflecting on the order and beauty inherent in God.

The first problem arising in the discussion of poetry in Anselm is the precarious nature of identifying poetry in the first place. The line between verse and prose is notoriously difficult to draw, although it is a matter of common sense that they are distinct modes of discourse. Poetry was traditionally associated with grammar in the *trivium* of liberal arts in medieval times, largely because it is marked by a particularly aesthetic concern for the sign itself and its relation to other signs, sometimes even relegating that which it signifies to lesser importance. This is not to say that semantic meaning is devalued in poetry but that there is a greater emphasis on the symmetry of words themselves in poetry than there is in common prose. In addition to this concern for the aesthetics of the sign itself, poetry is usually regarded as utilizing a greater amount of imagery, usually in the form of simile and metaphor, as well as allegory. Although metaphor is frequently found in more logical and argumentative works, it is more characteristic of the poetic mode. In this manner, poetry is often more graphic and visual, permeated by language that evokes vivid pictures in the audience’s minds. This pictorial element of poetry leads to the third and final element usually attributed to poetry - the arousal of the emotions. Poetry is often characterized as appealing to the affective rather

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than speculative side of language, arousing in the reader the full spectrum of human emotions from joy to despair. This final characteristic can be realized by reflecting on the common usage of language when we describe a rousing speech as being genuinely poetic.

In our discussion of Anselm’s use of poetry, it seems practical to adumbrate how his work relates to each of these three features of poetic speech. To begin, Anselm displays a masterful control of the aesthetic placement of words so fundamental to poetry. Benedicta Ward makes this clear in the introduction to her translation of *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm With the Proslogion*:

The prayers are written in a rhymed prose which is mannered and elegant to a fault; they are polished literary products, every word in its right place, ‘the whole consort dancing together’. There is antithesis, the use of parallel grammatical constructions, the rhetorical question, the careful build-up of each phrase and sentence to a climax, combined with balance and form. What makes them highly mannered works of medieval literature and of no other age is the almost childish play with words, the love of a jingle.\(^{309}\)

This use of almost every literary device stems from the monk’s acquaintance with the *trivium* and his saturation in the works of Augustine. Anselm acknowledges his debt to Augustine’s theology on many occasions, yet the most pervasive and significant influence of the Bishop of Hippo on Anselm lies not so much in the content and ideas of his treatises, but in the very style of the writing and the nature and form of his intellectual projects. It is worth repeating Anselm’s writings’ dependence on the Augustinian mode

\(^{309}\) Ward, 57.
of complex rhyming prose.\textsuperscript{310} In fact, the entirety of rhetoric’s classical poetic devices can be found dispersed through Anselm’s writing.\textsuperscript{311}

The second trait of poetic diction is the use of graphic imagery, and here Anselm once again has no shortage of relevant material. As we have noted, this technique is known as \textit{enargeia} or vivid, sensuous word-painting. This imagery can be seen in Anselm’s fascination with human transgression. In the first Prayer to Mary, “Sin is called a wound, a bite, an ulcer, a poison, a bad smell, but most of all it is a ‘torpor’, a huge dullness that must be broken through.”\textsuperscript{312} Such visual construction was very useful in meditation, the very purpose towards which Anselm devotes his poetry. Anselm’s wide use of images also include,

the similes of sin as dryness; and of grace as a dew, a rain, a stream, to ‘make fresh my dry places’. Others include the likeness of devils to wolves, the soul without God to an orphan, as well as the familiar Christian images of life as a warfare, the Fall as the overlaying of the image of God in man, self-knowledge as seeing oneself in a mirror.\textsuperscript{313}

Many of these images will recur throughout the devotional literature of the Middle Ages, but Anselm’s distinctive contribution to visual imagery in poetry may be his description and reflection of the events and relationships in the lives of the saints to whom he prays.\textsuperscript{314} The penitent praying Anselm’s poem is to conjure up the image of repentance when Anselm begs the Virgin Mary “to see, before both son and mother is a human sinner, penitent and confessing, groaning and praying (\textit{Prayer to Mary 2}).” The sinner

\textsuperscript{310} The author has noted above that such multi-syllabic structural use of rhyme has seemingly been lost to the entire English poetic literary tradition until the very recent recovery found in modern hiphop and spoken word circles.

\textsuperscript{311} A more detailed discussion and demonstration of this statement will be discovered in the evaluation of the \textit{Proslogion} in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{312} Ward, 61.

\textsuperscript{313} Ibid., 58.

\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
can easily imagine himself or herself in such a vivid portrayal of the process of repentance, thereby evoking the very process he describes.

This use of graphic imagery is often employed to provoke the final characteristic of the poetic medium – its affinity with emotion. Carruthers holds forth Anselm as one of the best and most astonishing examples of the use of enargeia to facilitate a depth of emotional response.\(^{315}\) As indicated earlier, Anselm specifically says that the purpose of his prayers is to stir up the emotions of both fear and love of God in the reader. As Carruthers bluntly puts it, “He is literally getting himself all worked up.”\(^{316}\) Throughout the course of the prayers, the modern reader is aghast as Anselm effectively scares, shames, and grieves himself into a state of mental anguish. It is in such emotional torture that the term “compunction” is brought back into proximity with its relative, “puncture.” Anselm’s heart is pierced by shame, fear, and hurt. Thus, penitential self-abasement through prayerful introspection is conjoined with aesthetic language and graphic imagery to become a means of transformation in the poetry of Anselm. It is exactly this meditative purpose for his poetry that points to a solution to the question of how to reconcile Anselm’s seemingly phrenetic preoccupation with logic to poetic expressions of psychological torment.

In order to better understand Anselm as poet it is important to not only survey the poetic prayers as a whole, but to engage with at least one poem in its entirety. \textit{Oratione 1, Prayer to God}, is the first and shortest of the prayers, and according to Ward may have served as a pattern prayer for the rest, or a prologue when praying through the others.\(^{317}\) It is important that we first view the poem in its entirety in Latin, utilizing the previous

\(^{315}\) Carruthers, 103.
^{316}\) Ibid., 105.
^{317}\) Ward, 59.
techniques of bolding rhyme, homioleuton, repetition and assonance, and italicizing the use of alliteration. Furthermore, repetition of words that are structural in nature will be underlined.

I: Oratio ad deum.

Omnipotens deus et misericors pater et bone domine,
    miserere mihi peccatori.
Da mihi veniam peccatorum meorum.
Cavere, vincere omnes insidias et tentationes
    et delectationes noxias;
perfecte mente et actu vitare quae prohibes,
    facere et servare quae iubes.
Credere, sperare, amare, vivere quod
    et quantum et ut scis et vis.
Compunctionem pietatis et humilitatis,
    discretem abstinentiam et carnis mortificationem.
Ad te amandum, orandum, laudandum, meditandum.
Ad omnem secundum te actum et cogitatum puram,
    sobriam, devotam, veracem mentem et efficacem;
mandatorum tuorum notitiam, dilectionem,
    delectationem, facilitatem et effectum.
Semper, domine, ad meliora cum humilitate proficere,
    et numquam deficere.

Ne committas me, domine,
    meae nec humanae ignorantiae aut infirmitati,
neque meis meritis,
    nec alii quam tuae piae dispositioni;
sed tu ipse clementer dispone me
    et omnes cogitatus et actus meos in beneplacito tuo,
ut fiat a me et in me et de me tua semper solum voluntas.
Libera me ab omni malo,
    et perduc me ad vitam aeternam, per dominum.

It is immediately apparent that Anselm has constructed an intricate poem, replete with both internal and end-line rhymes, repetition, antithesis, balance, alliteration, and parallelism. The dense poetic technique betrays an author with a strong grasp of the Latin language and a mind able to shape the structure of his writing without losing the sense of the content.
Anselm begins his prayer by addressing God in the Psalmonic language of praise, “Almighty God, merciful Father, and good Lord.” The medium of prayer is thus entered into from the first, and the power, mercy, and goodness of the addressee is proclaimed, followed by claiming those attributes into effect for the supplicant, asking for mercy and forgiveness, and the power to guard against “all insidiousnesses, and temptations, and noxious delectations.” The rhyming pattern of the call to “defend and defeat” and the dangers themselves helps heighten the emotional stress of the reader who undertakes the prayer [Cavere, vincere omnes insidias et tentationes / et delectationes noxias]. It should also be noted that this pattern of praise and petition will be found at the beginning of the rest of Anselm’s orationes as well.

Anselm then asks God to, “Perfect my intellect, and vituperate acts you prohibit / accomplish and preserve what you delimit.” The rhymes again add to the fervor of the request. The use of the rhyming-verb endings continues, “May I believe, hope, love, live what and how and when you know and wish.” The tight a-b-a-b-a chiastic formation of ere-are-are-ere to begin this sentence, is followed by the alliteration of quod and quantum in the middle, and concluded with the rhyme of scis and vis (which rhymes with pietatis and humilitatis in the following line).

The introduction of the idea of compunction in the next line is key to understanding the entirety of Anselm’s poetic corpus. As Ward indicates, “The centre of Anselm’s teaching on prayer is the word ‘compunction’.” Compunction is the heart-piercing of both love and fear; dread and sorrow, as well as desire and delight are equally able to prick the conscience of a person in prayer. Here he asks directly for “Compunction of piety and humility, discretionary abstinence and fleshly mortification.”

318 Ward, 53.
He then prays that he pray more, saying in rhyming participles, “To You loving, praying, praising, meditating.” Thus, Anselm believes God is able to help him in the very prayer and meditations he is writing, and his audience is reciting. This is followed by a sequence where every word besides prepositions and conjunctions ends with “m” whether in the form of *em, um,* or *am.* “To all things thinking and acting according to You - pure, sober, devout, truthful-minded and effective; being committed to your acquaintance, dilection, delectation, facilitation, and execution.” This section is balanced by a list of five adjectives describing the thought and action of the supplicant, with a list of five nouns constituting the characteristics of God. This type of balance of clauses is characteristic of Anselm’s poetic technique, here binding the human to the divine through both the continuous use of the –m ending, and the meticulous harmony between lists.

The monkish author continues asking, “Always, Lord, towards better things with humility be proficient, and never be deficient.” Here the verbs again serve as an end-line rhyme [*proficere*/*deficere*], while the adjective *humilitate* rhymes with the previous line’s *facilitatem.* Anselm’s poetry continually contains these types of connections so that there are poetic relationships of simple end-line rhymes, as well as internal rhymes within a given line, but also interesting rhymes with phrases which can be several lines previous or following. This type of inter-connection serves to bolster the sense of unity and order in the poem, which here accentuates the very content which is pleading that God align his imperfect life with God’s perfect will.

As the poem winds up it takes an interesting turn, beginning to utilize frequent first person pronouns, which were actually missing earlier on in a form of *ellipsis* and which had required the readers to supply the personal application to themselves. Now,
however, Anselm begins to echo the language of the Psalms more clearly, using the pronouns as a sort of anaphoristic refrain. “Do not commit me Lord, neither to my ignorant humanity or infirmity, nor my merit, nor other things than your pious disposition; but you yourself clemently dispose me.” The barrage of alliteration in “m” and “n” start off this cry, with a pairing of “i” as well, giving a desperate rhythm, which finds resolution in the pairing of God in “tuae” and “tu” and a state of constancy reflected in the repetition of his dispositioni with his ability to likewise dispone me.

Continuing, he asks, “but you yourself clemently dispose me, and all my thoughts and acts in your good pleasure, that your will only be always done by me and in me and regarding me.” The back and forth of first person and second person personal pronouns enacts the very request that the author’s will become characterized by the divine will. The discussion of the divine will [tua semper solum voluntas] serves as a segue into the end of the poem taking on a paraphrase of The Lord’s Prayer: “Liberate me from all evil, and lead me into eternal life, through the Lord.” The final allusions of the poem are fitting as the whole echoes the prayer of Jesus that “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Found as the last word of the opening and closing line, dominus serves as an inclusio for the poem. Although directed to the Father, His Son the Lord Jesus, is present, and indeed this closing word leads into the second oration, the “Prayer to Christ.”

The preceding observations are helpful in giving a feel for the poetry of Anselm, although they do not include the vivid imagery found elsewhere (as discussed earlier), nor the level of contrition and remorse found in the longer prayers. It does give a taste for the language, the poetic devices, and the dense rhymes, alliteration, and repetition,
and the way these devices can serve the content. These techniques are utilized to great effect throughout the poetic *orationes*, while Anselm is able to work with more concrete subject matter as his addressees are not the omnipotent, inscrutable Father, but particular objects like the cross, the bread and wine of the Eucharist, Jesus, and the biblical and extra-biblical saints such as Mary, John, Paul, Peter, and Benedict.

This leads to an important unique aspect to Anselm’s poetry, what Ward refers to as Anselm’s “distinctive quality, an interest in spiritual psychology.”\(^{319}\) Thus with each saint, Anselm addresses what God has done and how they experienced that work.\(^{320}\) Anselm has an imaginative insight into the heart-state of the saint, and is able to express the feelings that must have accompanied the well-known gospel and historical pericopes that serve as the basis of his poetic reflections. This spiritual psychology is evident even in the short *Prayer to God* above, in that Anselm is keen to express his own feelings of inadequacy and his deep desire to be united with the God he petitions.

The format of the prayers is often uniform, much like the Psalms: “Anselm’s meditative poetry begins with a composition of place, […] it then turns to dialogue, self-scrutiny, and the arousing of appropriate passions in the soul; and ends with petition and resolve.”\(^{321}\) Anselm’s ingenuity lies in his use of this basic format in ways that can both guide the reader in prayer and still lead to genuine surprise. His goal isn’t simply an audience that appreciates his clever wordplay and beauty of rhythm, Anselm wants his reader to engage in genuine and effective prayer.\(^{322}\) This doxological purpose in

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\(^{319}\) Ward, 58.

\(^{320}\) Ibid., 58.

\(^{321}\) Hibbs, 72.

\(^{322}\) Hibbs, 66. This is itself an aesthetic skill: “The artistry of Anselm’s writings aims to be utterly transparent, to transport the reader from detached mulling of words to active engagement and ultimately to prayer.”
Anselm’s poetry is important as he is following the tradition of the Psalms, as well as the poetic prayers of Boethius and Augustine, while utilizing the rhetorical and grammatical training he received in the eleventh century monastic school at Bec. At the same time, he has taken the doxological content even further by creating an entire category of poetry he calls *orationes*. It should be noted that the Latin term *orationes*, can refer either specifically to prayers, or more generally to sentences, “utterances”. As Anselm came to master the Latin sentence, utilizing the poetic techniques of rhetoric and grammar, as well as the logical structure of dialectic, it will become clear that his preoccupation with meditation would cause him to see all sentences as prayers, and thus his poetic prayers are not confined only to the collection that bares the title *Orationes*, but indeed to all his work.

### 3.2 *Sola Ratione*: Dialectic Analytics

The philosophy of Anselm is explicitly seen in the works he fashioned in formats echoing Plato’s dialogues, Augustine’s *Soliloquies*, or Aristotle’s more didactic format, the treatise. There are multiple instances of both the dialogue and treatise genres found in the writings of Anselm, while the *Monologion* serves as a distinct philosophical meditation. It is because of these works in well-known philosophical formats that Anselm has become known primarily as a philosopher in the modern era. However, this was recognized even in his own day, as his student Orderic informs us that when he was abbot many people came to Bec “to consult the proven sophist (or philosopher).”

Anselm was renowned for his utilization of reason, to the point that some scholars have

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critiqued him as an early proponent of unbridled rationalism. Before delving into this controversial question of whether or not Anselm paves the way for the Enlightenment reification of reason, it is important to become familiar with the monk’s philosophical works themselves.

First, we turn to Anselm’s dialogues, where philosophy and theology are co-mingled in ground-breaking ways for the eleventh century. Plato was the great popularizer of the ancient dialogue format, but the direct source for our author’s usage is more likely his beloved Augustine. If Southern’s dating is accepted, the very first piece of Anselm’s writing in our possession, *De Grammatico*, takes the form of a dialogue between a Teacher and a Student concerning the complexities of verbal signification. The work is unique in that it is “Anselm’s only commentary on an ancient text, his only work on a secular subject, the work in which he was nearest to Lanfranc, and the only one in which he draws extensively on Aristotle.” Of interest is the fact that Anselm repeatedly uses the word *syllogismus*, showing his understanding of the technical philosophical nomenclature. Anselm also gives a rare statement of respect towards philosophers saying: “On the other hand, that literate is quality is obviously believed by those philosophers [philosophi] who have written about this matter, and it is impudent to disregard their authority on these subjects (*De Grammatico* 1).” Furthermore, Anselm does not utilize assonance and rhyme as he does in most of his other work. The purpose seems to have been to teach syllogistic logic, perhaps to the exterior school at Bec, and thus it does not have an explicit relation to theology proper. However, the distinction between normal linguistic usage and the proper technical usage discovered in

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324 Etienne Gilson, *Reason in the Middle Ages* (New York: Scribner’s, 1951).
326 Ibid., 63.
his discussion of paronymy becomes foundational for all his future argumentation, including his theological works.\textsuperscript{327} It is in this document that the logician proper is made apparent, with Anselm’s skill at dividing, defining, and concluding displaying a dialectical bent that shapes the entirety of his later theological reflection.

It was many years before the dialogue format would be put to use again, and when it was, Anselm drafted a series of three related dialogues \textit{On Truth}, \textit{On Free Will}, and \textit{On the Fall of the Devil}. As Anselm himself remarks, they share a similarity of matter and style, and in an interesting note, he declares that they “pertain to the study of Sacred Scripture (\textit{On Truth}, Preface).” This later statement is of particular interest, since Anselm is unique amongst major medieval theologians in that he never produced a commentary on Scripture. That understanding Scripture was of great importance to the monk is evident here and in his letters. Yet, he obviously did not see the best use of his writing time to be pouring over the minutia of every sentence of a biblical book, acknowledging instead, to use an anachronistic term, that his strength lay in systematic theological concerns rather than biblical theology. In these three dialogues, he tackles some of the most pressing logical problems relating to biblical interpretation, including the nature of truth, free will, and divine foreknowledge. The purpose appears to be logically clarifying and explicating the truth of Scripture in light of apparent logical inconsistencies. Why such a series of dialogues would be important to Anselm becomes clearer in this light: to strengthen the faith of those who are confronted by such difficulties when they apply their minds to aspects of the Catholic faith.

The most famous of Anselm’s dialogues, \textit{Cur Deus Homo}, is also the most explicit in terms of purpose. It was written, says the author in the commendation of the
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{327} Henry, \textit{Logic}, 12.
\end{footnotesize}
work to Pope Urban II, in order “to arise to contemplate the logic of our beliefs.” More
telling, however, is his bold declaration that,

> I consider that the understanding which we gain in this life stands midway between faith and revelation. It follows, in my view, that, the nearer someone comes to attainment of this understanding, the nearer that person approaches to revelation, for which we all pant in anticipation (Cur Deus Homo, Preface).

Here, Anselm boldly declares what was intimated in the other dialogues, that procuring logical comprehension of the truths contained within the faith brings one closer to God, the ultimate task of every monk, indeed every Christian. He also makes explicit that this understanding is available even to unbelievers who reject Christ on rational grounds, if one, such as Anselm, “proves, by unavoidable steps” the necessity of a Man-God redeemer (Cur Deus Homo, Preface). This Aristotelian language of proof, necessity, and logic in matters of faith serves as a precursor to the scholastic period, and has caused Anselm to receive a reputation as “The Father of Scholasticism.”

In regard to Anselm’s philosophy, another formal type of composition to be examined is what we have termed the formal treatise. Such a genre is commonplace in recent centuries and approximates what is typically referred to as an essay. This genre appears to have become more frequently utilized in Anselm’s later years and includes On the Incarnation of the Word, On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin, On the Procession of the Holy Spirit, and De Concordia. The purposes for their inception vary from responding to a personal attack by Roscelin, to requests from a friend, a similar request from the Pope to discuss the pressing difference with the Greeks regarding the filoque, and finally a personal lack of satisfaction with an earlier attempt at reconciling the ancient problem of grace and free will. It is in these treatises that we begin to see that theological questions do not only have repercussions for the individual’s intellect, but
also have a tremendous effect on the social and political culture in which one is immersed. Anselm argued that understanding the matters of faith brought one closer to God, but when as Archbishop of Canterbury he became more and more a man of worldly affairs, he saw the practical implications of creating doctrinal treatises as well. Perhaps it is the reduction in available time to contemplate and write which led to his adoption of this easier to compose genre, and this may account as well for the atrophied poetic style as Anselm gets older, evidenced by a decrease of rhyming prose and literary devices.\(^\text{328}\) Alternatively, the treatise format allowed for more complex sentence structure, and the lack of poetic devices may add an air of clarity, or at least a lack of distraction. Whatever the case, these works left much less of a mark on the history of theology, but nevertheless never veered from his primary conviction that rational reflection on matters of faith was a means to draw nearer to the mind of God.

In many regards, the *Monologion* serves as a foundational work in Anselm’s developing a philosophical rigour towards the subject of the Christian God. It is his first book to apply the dialectical method to faith, and displays a style distinct from both the *De Grammatico* and *De Orationes* that precede it or are simultaneous to its creation. The work was begun as the answer to a request from his fellow monks “to write down a kind of model meditations [… ] in everyday language, on the essence of the divine *(Monologion, Prologue).*” In addition they gave their prior the following conditions:

> Nothing whatsoever to be argued on the basis of the authority of Scripture, but the constraints of reason concisely to prove, and the clarity of truth clearly to show, in the plain style, with everyday arguments, and down-to-earth dialectic, the conclusions of distinct investigations *(Monologion, Prologue).*

\(^{328}\) This explanation is suggested by Southern, *A Portrait*, 77.
The philosophical project was strictly delineated, and its author has both characterized it as a “meditation, and a “treatise.” In the very first chapter he declares the ability to show the faith “by reason alone” [sola ratione]. Here he introduces the argument that everything that is good must receive its goodness through something else, namely the Good itself, the Supremely Good. Starting with this Platonic framework, Anselm begins to argue logically for the validity of the fundamental Christian doctrines, including creation ex nihilo, the Trinity, the rational essence of humanity to love the supreme essence, the sovereignty of God, and many others. This meditation employs various modes of argumentation, a chain that attempts to demonstrate the rationality of the Christian faith.

After this brief survey of Anselm’s more specifically philosophical works – and leaving aside the pivotal work of the Proslogion which will be dealt with in the next chapter - it is important to explore the notion of logic and reason in Anselm’s ensemble. As Marcia L. Colish makes clear, the eleventh century is marked by “the increasing urge to frame theological issues in philosophical terms and the intense interest in logic, speculative grammar, and semantics.” Anselm was no exception to the spirit of his age; indeed he is one of the greatest medieval figures in Christendom to herald the supremacy of logic in articulating the reasonableness of the faith. Not since Boethius had any single figure so effectively elevated the role of logic in the theological task. As stated in 2.2, it appears that Boethius’ influence on Anselm has, in fact, been underestimated. His method of using “no external aid” and using a chain of arguments “grafted upon another” were directly dependent upon this precursor. Likewise, part of

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329 Anselm states: “In the course of frequent rereading of this treatise.”
his content, including foundational conceptual elements of his famous ontological argument, depended upon reading Boethius. Aristotle’s influence upon Anselm can also be traced through Boethius, as well as exposure to the Stoic laws, and thus, his very use of detailed logic owes much to the Catholic martyr.

As a clear and critical thinker, Anselm, like Boethius, finds it important to systematize - “that I might lead you from the more known to the less known (On Truth, 9).” Such an emphasis on systematization is ultimately linked with a particular conception of order. In the preface to the same treatise, he chastises the scribes who too hastily copied down some of his treatises and arranged them in the wrong order, since “their matter and similarity of style demanded that they be written in the order that I have listed them (On Truth, Preface).” The order of presentation is not a matter of preference but is intrinsic to the subject matter itself.

These observations, conjoined with the “unavoidable logical steps” referenced in Cur Deus Homo, reveal a monk focused on Order, both ontological and epistemological, and abhorrent of muddled thinking, the sister of devilish Chaos. Irrationality and chaos are linked and condemned explicitly in the final chapter of the Monologion:

And so it would be extremely contrary to claim that it [the supreme essence] does not dominate what it has created, that either something else, less powerful, wise and good, or nothing at all - just the entirely irrational, unstructured chaos of chance – controls what it has created (Monologion, 80).

Here, irrational chance is explicitly contrasted to the supreme essence’s control over Creation; existence is characterized by being “regulated” by the supreme Wisdom, God. Furthermore, rationality is seen to have a correspondence with the very Mind of God.
This emphasis on the order of the universe by the supreme essence is an important theme throughout Anselm’s writing.\textsuperscript{331}

It is this correspondence between human reason and the logic of the Divine that leads Anselm into his ontological conception of Truth. Anselm seems to concur with his student Boso’s view of Truth as participation explicated at the beginning of On Truth: “something is true only by participating in the truth (On Truth, 1).” Making this abstract concept even simpler, Boso says, “I only know that when it signifies that what is is, then truth is in it and it is true (On Truth, 1).” Anselm himself echoes this sentiment later, saying, “Therefore there is truth in the essence of all things, because it is by being in the highest truth that they exist (On Truth, 7).” Existence and truth are irrevocably interrelated, and as a result, for Anselm, the test of truth is its correspondence to reality. A correspondence view of Truth is proclaimed: “Therefore something is truly said to have been because it is so in reality (On Truth, 10).” The relationship between Truth and Being is cemented: anything that exists does so because it is “in truth,” and any statement is true if it references what is “in reality.” Herein Anselm’s epistemology is explicitly grounded in a participatory metaphysical worldview.

Obviously, the above assessment of truth and ontology is highly contested in the contemporary setting, not the least because of a fear that such conceptions of metaphysics and epistemology lead to an unhealthy obsession with necessity and certitude. Certainly, there is no shortage of examples in Anselm indicating just such a fascination with “unalterable logic (Cur Deus Homo, 2.21).” To demonstrate this, we need simply bring forward the apodictic language of “reason”, “prove”, “clarity of truth”, “arguments,  

\textsuperscript{331} See Anselm’s reference to the “order of the universe” in Virgin Conception and Original Sin, 6. Cf. “the universal order” in Cur Deus Homo, 1.13.
“dialectic, “investigations”, “investigating”, “arguing”, and even “reasoning alone” that permeates the preface to the *Monologion*, a preface which, as Anselm himself argues, shows “the aims and methods of the discussion (*Monologion*, Preface).” The first chapter speaks of “a necessary conclusion from reasoning” and includes further language of proof such as “Quite certain, indeed, and clear to all who are willing to see”, “necessary”, “it is certain”, “the reasoning above is irrefutable”, and “necessarily,” (*Monologion*, 1) while the fourth chapter declares, “It is undeniable that some natures can be better than others (*Monologion*, 4).” The brazen confidence of the *Monologion* goes so far as to unflinchingly describe the ability of logical reasoning to convince even the unbeliever of God’s existence:

> Now, take someone who either has never heard of, or does not believe in, and so does not know, this – this, or indeed any of the numerous other things which we necessarily believe about God and his creation. I think that they can, even if of average ability, convince themselves, to a large extent, of the truth of these beliefs, simply by reason alone (*Monologion*, 1).

Indeed, the non-believer “can easily avail himself” of this opportunity and “then, guided by reason, he may make rational progress towards what he, unreasoningly, does not know (*Monologion*, 1).” Here, in the *Monologion*, we have a clear statement that logical reasoning can be utilized to demonstrate the truth of God’s existence to someone who does not believe. This passage will be particularly important to remember in the next chapter’s discussion of whether or not the *Proslogion* is able to serve as a proof to atheists of God’s Existence.

Even stronger evidence that Anselm uses judicative modes of discourse in an apologetic fashion can be found in the approach of *Why God Became Man* (*Cur Deus Homo*). Therein, the author discusses the “logic of the faith.” The book begins with
statements which would seem to corroborate the Barthian perspective, stating that he is often asked to give reasons for his faith by people, “not with a view to arriving at faith through reason, but in order that they may take delight in the understanding and contemplation of things which they believe and may be, as far as they are able, ‘ready always to give satisfaction to all who ask the reason for the hope that is in us’ [1 Pet. 3:15] (Cur Deus Homo, 1.1).” His interlocutor, Boso, even states,

right order demands that we should believe the profundities of the Christian faith before we presume to discuss it logically, but, on the other, it seems to me negligence if after we have been confirmed in that faith, we do not make an effort to understand what we believe (Cur Deus Homo, 1.1).

Here we see most definitively Anselm’s belief that the Christian faith is prior to any form of logical argumentation.

However, this prioritization of matters of faith in his own case does not invalidate logic’s ability to persuade the nonbeliever of the truths of said Faith. Anselm titles his third chapter “Objections of unbelievers and answers of believers” and puts into Boso’s mouth the key to discerning the relationship between logic and faith:

Allow me, then, to use the words characteristic of unbelievers. For it is only fair, at a time when we are keen to explore the logic of our faith, to set out the objections of those who are totally unwilling to come to this faith without a logical reason for doing so. I grant that they are in search of logic because they do not believe, whereas we are seeking it because we do believe. Nevertheless, the object of our quest is one and the same (Cur Deus Homo, 1.3).

In this passage, such unbelievers were largely Jews, Muslim Arabs, and other non-Orthodox theists who rejected the deity of Christ; but this does not rule out the possibility of a person who rejects the very concept of God. Again, this passage will be important to remember in the later discussion surrounding the Proslogion. For, the passage still clearly outlines the fact that, although Anselm himself pursues logic as a means to
elucidate an already firm faith, there are those who desire such reasoning to be convinced of the need for faith in the first place. That this principle could remain true for the basic belief in God’s existence itself seems entirely plausible.

This *Cur Deus Homo* passage is followed by Anselm’s dismissal of the apologetic use of appropriate parallels, such as death entering through one man’s disobedience and life being restored through one man’s obedience. Although such parallels are indeed beautiful, the unbelievers do not find them “sufficient grounds” to believe in God’s salvation. Instead, in the quest to win the unbeliever, “What has to be demonstrated, therefore is the logical soundness of the truth, that is: a cogent reason (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.4).” Logic is indeed of major importance to Anselm as an apologetic tool, and he repeatedly addresses the concerns of the unbelievers through demonstrative reasoning throughout the course of this work. Furthermore, he apparently does not fault the unbeliever in their demand for said “cogent reason.” Indeed, he intends to give it to them.

There is not enough space to cite all of Anselm’s references to logic, dialectic, and his seeming obsession with “certain” demonstrable knowledge, but before concluding, one striking passage must be examined. Anselm is so convinced in the power of logic to reveal a truth corresponding to reality that he insists “we ought to accept as certain not only the things that we read in Holy Scripture but also the things that follow from them with logical necessity, with no other arguments to the contrary (On the Procession of the Holy Spirit, 11).” Reason is such a powerful tool that even principles not explicitly laid out in Scripture may be accepted as certain if it can be clearly demonstrated that they derive logically from those propositions spoken truthfully by God.
in revelation. Surely, in such a statement, we see a foundational concept that is implicit in much bible-based systematic theology. Concomitantly, and no less surprising, for Anselm, the truth of any logical argument that can be shown directly in sacred Scripture should be attributed to the work of God himself. If contemporary Christians wish to hail Anselm as a voice relevant to current philosophy and theology, it must be done by a means other than denying Anselm’s conviction that logic has the ability to convince the nonbeliever of the certain truth of his Faith.

Although it has been demonstrated that Anselm exhibits a heavy reliance upon the philosophic activity of logic, it must be remembered that, despite monasteries’ role as the great centers of learning for almost a millennia, there was also a deep suspicion of human reasoning within the monastic tradition since its inception by St. Antony - a man who had no books. More telling, considering the order to which Anselm belonged and his devotion to its founder, is Pope Gregory the Great’s declaration concerning St. Benedict, that, “He renounced study, put aside his father’s residence and fortune and desiring to please God alone, he went in search of the monastic habit in order to live a holy life. Thus he quitted his studies, learnedly ignorant and wisely unskilled.” From Benedict - the greatest of monks, and Anselm’s “good leader” and “gentle master” - we learn that a civilized philosophical education was in no way a prerequisite for the life of holiness prescribed by rigorous asceticism. This is not to discredit our earlier depiction of

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332 Thus Anselm can refer to his ontological argument as “certain truth and true certitude” in Proslogion, 14, (trans. Ward, 95).
333 Cur Deus Homo, 2.22. “But if it is corroborated by the Testimony of Truth, as we think we have by means of logic discovered, we ought to attribute this not to ourselves but to God, who is blessed through all ages.”
Anselm’s devotion to demonstrative logic, but merely to indicate that his monastic life hints towards a tempering of this enthusiasm for dialectic.

We come to discover that, like his beloved Augustine, Anselm did not adhere to a vision of cold, disengaged logic, the idol of the Enlightenment and current scientific culture. Delving into his work, we find that he repeatedly puts limits on the provenance of logic. For instance, in the opening chapter of the *Monologion*, where we saw one of the clearest statements that logic can lead the unbeliever towards faith, we find him stating that, if he says anything that has not been taught by a greater authority, it is because it is a “necessary conclusion from reasoning that seems right to me.” Yet he continues, “Nevertheless, it is not thereby asserted as necessary without qualification. Rather I assert it as possible – for the present at least (*Monologion*, 1).” On second look, these “necessary conclusions” seem to be rather tentative assertions dependent upon the continued upholding of his arguments. In this light, Anselm can advise his student, that “I do not want you to stick to our findings to the extent of stubbornly hanging on to them should someone manage, by dint of better opposing arguments, to demolish our results and establish different ones (*De Grammatico*, 21).” Ironically, it appears that one of the greatest certainties is that our knowledge will never be able to capture the truth entirely. He outlines the provisional nature of his logic, and the certainty that there will always remain deeper reasons to answer why God became man than he can elucidate:

My attempt will take the form not so much of a demonstration as of an enquiry undertaken jointly with you, and it will be made with the stipulation which I wish to be understood to apply to all that I say, namely, that if I say something which is not confirmed by a source of greater authority – even if I seem to be proving it by means of logic – it is to be accepted with *only this degree of certainty: that it seems to be so provisionally*, until God shall in some way reveal to me something better. If, moreover, it comes about that I seem to any extent to be replying satisfactorily to your question, it ought to be regarded as a certainty that someone
wiser than I could do this more fully. Indeed, it is a matter of certain knowledge that, whatever a human being may say on this subject, there remain deeper reasons, as yet hidden from us, for a reality of such supreme importance (Cur Deus Homo, 1.3).

Several matters concerning logic become apparent in this dense passage, including the provisional nature of knowledge derived through logic in comparison to revelation from God and the certainty that hidden in God are reasons whose depth we cannot plumb. This last feature brings up Anselm’s embracement of the apophatic tradition, which declares that God cannot be known. Anselm demonstrates that, in certain cases, dialectic must exit, for logic has a limit.

Hibbs will address this interesting balance between a logical certainty and a recognition of the limits of logic, pointing out that Anselm describes the rational power as the ability to distinguish the “good from the not-good, the greater from the lesser good.” Thus, “Anselm’s robust conception of reason enables him to make sense both of its capacities and its limitations. The delicate balance allows him to avoid both rationalism and fideism.” This realistic approach to Logic allows Anselm to trust in the capacity of reason, even to the point that if someone truly can grasp his reasoning they should see the necessity of faith, while also limiting reason’s ability to completely grasp a topic as unfathomable as the Supreme Nature. Anselm himself doesn’t need to be reasoned into his faith, his reasoning is simply helping him better understand an existing faith condition. At the same time, Anselm does not expect every mind to simply accept

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335 Cf. Cur Deus Homo, 2.11, “These reasons are more readily and clearly discernible in Christ’s life and works than can be demonstrated by reason alone, hypothetically, as if before experience of the events.”
336 Compare to Anselm’s statement that why God saves some humans “certainly cannot be understood by reason” in Proslogion, 11 (trans. Ward, 94).
337 Hibbs, 64.
the assertions of Scripture on their own claims, but argues some people need to be given a good reason to believe.

### 3.3 *Mentis Pulchritudo*: Poetic/Dialectic Synthetics

The corpus of St. Anselm of Canterbury appears on first perusal to consist of disjunctive material, evidenced by distinct genres such as poetic prayers and strict logical analysis, and created for diverse occasions. Indeed, without an understanding of the monastic context of his compositions, abstract questions of the paronymous ability of a word to refer to both quality and substance (*De Grammatico*) seem to have little relation to the visceral cries of despair in a prayer to an ancient saint (*Orationes*). Yet, Anselm was a man of singular focus – God – and even his most abstruse theological dissections were of one piece with his fervent prayers, for they were directed towards the end of the contemplation of God. In support of this statement, we must first delve even deeper into the rich world of monastic learning, especially its relation to the scholasticism which was nascent in Anselm’s milieu, then explore the nature and end of the various genres he utilizes, and finally, establish the commonalities of purpose and process evidenced in *meditatio* (this final objective will be continued in the following chapter as it is especially evident in his most famous work, the *Proslogion*).

It appears that early on Anselm had purposed to become a monk, although later on he thought he would instead become a scholar. That he ended up becoming both is an irony made sharper by the seeming difficulty historians have placing him wholly in one category or the other. D. P. Henry, for example, boldly declares, “It is indeed

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remarkable that the central period of Scholasticism should thus begin with Anselm’s *De Grammatico* and end with its echo in Wyclif. “339 Leclercq, on the other hand, points out that even Anselm’s most speculative treatises have a tone that differentiates him drastically from the scholastics. 340 The reason for such troublesome categorization lies in the fact that Anselm, who even after his election as Archbishop of Canterbury declared himself “at heart a monk,”341 was also a gifted and exacting practitioner of the newly acquired Aristotelian logic. This later preoccupation with dialectical method in intellectual research could even lead to “silent opposition” from a large percentage of his fellow monks, not the least of which was his master Lanfranc.342

In this light, the fact that Anselm is a bridge figure between the older monastic form of intellectual activity and the more rigorous scholasticism can hardly be contested. 343 Yet, in many ways, it is his affinity for aspects of each form of theology that makes him ultimately differentiated from both – a hybrid of unique stature and import. In short, Anselm was a monastic-scholastic theologian. Before we examine Anselm’s particular contribution in fusing these two discrete schools of thought, we must first return to the tradition bequeathed from the ancients which both schools already held in common, namely, the Seven Liberal Arts, and in particular the three linguistic arts that comprise the *trivium*. Both Monastic and Scholastic theology were grounded in the arts of grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic (or logic). Although, as we have seen, in practice the boundaries between the three arts were always shifting, with one rising to dominate its

339 Henry, Logic, 30. Earlier (p. 12) Henry can state “that Anselm, without any reserve, merits his title of “the father of Scholasticism.”
340 Leclercq, 243.
341 Letter 178, trans. in Chibnall, “From Bec to Canterbury,” 23-44.
342 Leclercq, 230.
343 For further discussion of Anselm’s ambiguous position between monastic and scholastic forms of theology see Leclercq’s Appendix V, 335-336.
sister arts, the distinction between the three always remained solid in theory. However, for the monk even the verbal arts of the trivium are subjugated to his most important vocation – meditatio. In essence, all use of human language is ideally to be directed to the contemplation and meditation of God.

Thus, the most important concept in understanding Anselm’s literature in regards to the relationship between poetry and philosophy is that of meditation. The prayers were very obviously emotional poetry, while Anselm’s meditation, the Monologion, utilizes a strict form of dialectic reason. Yet the distinction between prayer and meditation is not hard and fast, as Anselm himself indicates when he declares that one of his writings is “is not so much a prayer as a meditation.” Still, he distinguishes such a meditation from “the prayers proper” on what seems to be chiefly functional grounds. Anselm describes the function of meditation himself saying, “briefly the soul shakes itself free from sin, despises it, is humbled by it, is troubled by fear of the Last Judgment and concludes by breaking out in tears and sighs.” The affinity to the prayers, themselves created for meditation, is obvious, especially in the production of fear and the resulting compunction.

In fact, it is telling that both a less ornamental example of writing like the Monologion and a more poetic example like the Meditation to Incite Fear are classified according to the genre of meditation. The latter Meditatio ad concitandum timorem is most obviously related to the poetic Orationes in use of rhyme, alliteration, balance, and other devices. The work opens thus:

Terret me vita mea.
Namque diligenter discussa apparat mihi
    aut peccatum aut sterilitas fere tota vita mea.
Et si quid fructus in ea videtur,
    sic est aut simulatum aut imperfectum

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344 Epist. 10, trans. in Ward, 172.
aut aliquo modo corruptum,
ut possit aut non placere aut displicere deo.

The similarity to the prayers is obvious in the first sentence, with multiple rhymes across multiple lines (terret, apparat, sterilitas, fere; tota vita mea), the use of pronouns to end the lines resembling the psalms (mea, mihi, mea), anaphora (vita mea, vita mea), and punctuating alliteration (diligenter discussa). Yet unlike the prayers this section is not directly addressing God or a saint, but either himself or his reader. Still, the work addresses both the author and the reader, yet later directly addresses Jesus, moving into more conventional prayer. The unity of the whole piece seems to be the fact that it is the work of a human mind contemplating its imperfection, its position before God, both reflecting matter-of-factly on its circumstances, and crying out for Divine Help to remedy those very circumstances. In this way, this Meditation takes on both the ability to present propositions and states of fact like the philosophical treatises, and emotionally to address the psychological reality of the author to the divine for aid. As such, the meditation demonstrates a unity of treatise and poetic prayer genres that is emblematic of Anselm’s understanding of language and its use.

The difference between the official Orationes and these Meditationes appears to be that a meditation is an extended reflection upon a given subject rather than just an address to a specific person. The function of the meditations on fear, virginity, and human redemption is not simply the expression of sinfulness to another but the concentration of intellectual faculties upon a particular topic, allowing the mind to ruminate and imbibe the truth contained within. A mental transformation is intended to occur, in order to create a greater sense of understanding a divine topic, attended, as it
still must be, by a concomitant affective response, and thereby a nearing to the presence of God.

This distinction, a seeming preciosity with regards to the *Prayers and Meditations* collection, becomes more apparent upon examining Anselm’s longest meditation, the *Monologion*. The opening sequence still displays use of some harmonious endings, but the balance of clauses is less pronounced, and Anselm uses longer phrases that do not reflect the poetic sensibility of the *Prayers* or the more poetic *Meditations*. The *Monologion* begins:

\[
\text{Si quis unam naturam, sumnam omnium quae sunt,}
\text{solam sibi in aeterna sua beatitudine sufficientem,}
\text{omnibusque rebus aliiis hoc ipsum quod aliquid sunt}
\text{aut quod aliquomodo bene sunt,}
\text{per omnipotentem bonitatem suam dantem et facientem,}
\text{alique perplura quae de deo siue de eius creatura necessarie credimus,}
\text{aut non audiendo aut non credendo ignorat:}
\text{puto quia ea ipsa ex magn\'a parte,}
\text{si uel mediocris ingenii est,}
\text{potest ipse sibi saltem sola ratione persuadere.}
\]

There is still some poetic quality to the passage, especially use of alliteration and some similar endings. But the end-line rhymes and intricate rhyme of the prayers, where almost every word rhymes with another, are not present. Furthermore, the complete idea is not summed up in a line or two, but the sentence continues on, with multiple subordinate clauses, across numerous lines. In fact, the above is technically a single sentence. So here we see a more sparing use of poetic devices, and a more complicated sentence structure. The *Monologion* is closer to the treatises in this respect than the prayers. We will see that the *Proslogion* however is closer to the prayers than the treatises and the *Monologion*. There are times when the *Monologion*’s content is put
more poetically to be sure, like a few in the following where Anselm states: “ut deinde ratione ducente et illo prosequente ad ea quae irrationabiliter ignorat, rationabiliter proficiat (Monologion, I).” But this more complicated rhyme structure is much less frequent in the Monologion, and it never approaches the sustained poetic sensibility of the Orationes and other Meditationes. One might even characterize the difference between the Monologion and the Meditation to Incite Fear as the difference of a treatise using paragraph format in comparison to a poem utilizing stanzas. Even then one cannot deny a certain poetic aspect to the Monologion as a meditation on the divine essence.

In comparison to the prayers and poetic meditations, the chances of the reader of the Monologion being moved to tears upon first encounter are comparatively small, unless they are the tears of frustration due to lack of comprehension. Yet the fact that it is indeed a meditation is made explicit in the prologue and further attested to by Anselm’s revelation in the preface to the Proslogion that the original title to this earlier work was An Example of Meditation on the Meaning of Faith. Yet in the Monologion prologue it is referred to both as a meditation and a treatise, illustrating that the meditation is a broader category than either prayer or treatise, possibly incorporating both.

The circumstances of the Monologion’s composition are laid out in the prologue: Anselm was directly requested by the monks under his supervision to create a meditation on the essence of the divine. Furthermore, this project was to be distinguished from the most common form of monastic meditation in that it was not to be argued on the authority (auctoritas) of Scripture but by means of reason (ratio) alone through down-to-earth dialectic. Even the scholastics, with their endless retinue of proof-texts taken from
Scripture and the Fathers, had never dared so bold an attempt to elevate the workings of an individual human mind, a point that the negative response to the text by Archbishop Lanfranc serves to emphasize. This is not to say that the source of the meditation is not those same authorities, for Anselm makes clear that he believes everything in the meditation to be found in Augustine’s *De Trinitate*. Rather, Anselm believes that people can, “even if of average ability, convince themselves, to a large extent, of the truth of these beliefs, simply by reason alone (*Monologion*, 1).” It is here that we find the purpose of the treatise; to render the truth concerning the divine essence understandable to the meditator. It would be a mistake, however, to think that Anselm’s purpose ends there, since knowledge for its own sake is *anathema* to a reverent monk, especially one whose *Prayer to God* asks, “May I act and think in all things according to your will, purely, soberly, devoutly, and with a true and effective mind (15-16).” Anselm believes that the rational mind is the image of God and that, the more one understands one’s own mind, the closer one comes to God (*Monologion*, 66). In fact, as the title of chapter sixty-eight declares, “Rational creation was made to love the supreme essence.” Therefore, the ultimate goal of the meditation is to ascend to knowledge of God, and indeed, the work ends with the logical conclusion that this triune supreme essence “is the only thing from which benefits are to be hoped for. It alone is that towards which one must fly from adversity. It alone is that toward which one must address one’s supplications for anything whatsoever (*Monologion*, 80).” Like the previously discussed meditations, then, this bulky meditation has as its ultimate end the production of love for God. Furthermore, if it is not addressed to God in the concrete pattern of a prayer, it acknowledges that it is being written (and recited) in the presence of its ultimate Subject.
Thus, it is the production of love for God that ensures that Anselm’s Meditations utilize both poetic and philosophic language.

Furthermore, even in formal treatises, such as *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm indicates that there is an aesthetic dimension to his most didactic works. He argues that the logical answers he gives to Christians’ questions “please them” and they wish to “take delight in the understanding and contemplation of things they believe, and may be, as far as they are able, ‘ready always to give satisfaction to all who ask the reason for the hope that is in us’ [1 Pet. 3:15] (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1).” Thus, a further reason for all his writing is both to delight and equip the saints (following Augustine’s use of Cicero and Horace). Anselm even explains his aesthetic reasons for choosing the dialogue genre to relate logical material, because “matters which are explored by means of question and answer are clearer to many people, particularly to slower intellects, and are correspondingly more pleasing (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1).” Again pedagogical and aesthetic reasons are indicated for his use of dialogue. This aesthetic dimension to Anselm’s project is further addressed in his explanation as to why he hesitates to embark on this particular project:

Something else which makes me hold back from complying with your request is that not only is the subject-matter precious, but, in conformity with the fact that it is about someone beautiful, ‘with beauty excelling the sons of men’ [Ps. 44:3 Vulg.], it is itself correspondingly beautiful in its logic, beyond the reasoning of men. On this account, I am afraid that, just as I am invariably annoyed by bad painters when I see the Lord himself depicted as of ugly appearance, the same fault will be found with me, if I presume to plough through such beautiful subject-matter with an unpolished and contemptible style of writing (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1).

Here, Anselm is concerned with matters of rhetoric, for the style of writing must be sufficiently beautiful if it is to deal with so noble a subject. Thus, we are given a clue as to why our Archbishop so diligently perfected his style of rhyming prose characteristic of
most of his corpus: in order to give for such lofty subjects as suitable vehicle as was within his power. It will be argued later that this concept of beauty and truth in the use of language is central to understanding why poetry and philosophy coalesce in the writings of Anselm.

This concern for rhetoric even in philosophical works further points to the centrality of meditation in Anselm’s writing. In *The Craft of Thought*, Mary Carruthers argues that monastic *meditatio* is in reality a disciplined craft for the production of thought. Meditation is, she insists, primarily a procedure of literary composition related in essence to rhetorical invention. This “monastic rhetoric” is more a practice of composition than a method to persuade others.345 The tools of this practice were those that aided the memory, including rhetorical tropes, parallelisms, rhyme, vivid or even violent mental images, metonymy, allegory, oxymoron, chiasmus, repetition, brevity, copiousness, opposition, contrast, and many others.346 With the use of such ornamentation, the mind would absorb and, more importantly, remember the composition presented to it, not only making it available for recollection, but allowing it to become a part of the person themselves.

The above insight corresponds with Southern’s assertion that, for Anselm, *meditatio* is used synonymously with *cogitatio*, except that the latter may at times be used in regard to worldly affairs or corrupt things, whereas the former is saved exclusively for pure reflection on the essences of things.347 Thus, when *cogitatio* is used virtuously it has the same purpose as *meditatio*, to ascend into the mind of God. Therefore, meditation was not simply a genre utilized by Anselm; it was itself the very activity of reason, the

345 Carruthers, 3.
346 Ibid., 117.
production of thought. True thought, then, is meditation. In this sense, we can understand all of his literary efforts as examples of mediation, and therein we see how they are of a kind, despite seeming differences. All thought, or rather, all thought worth thinking, is a form of meditation, with the aim of gaining a closer proximity to the divine.

In this light, we can also begin to understand the degree to which Scripture actually permeated Anselm’s thinking. Unlike many of the scholastics, who proof-texted and debated the Scriptures ad nauseam, Anselm simply made the Bible a part of his very being. His every thought was controlled by the countless number of times he had heard each and every Psalm - the monastic offices ensuring he heard the entire Psalter at least once a week. Likewise, the Church Fathers were read aloud daily. The result was that just as Anselm thought naturally in biblical terms, he also thought naturally in the Fathers, especially Augustine. He felt no need to methodically document his every reference to Scripture or this great Doctor, and moreover, such notation would hamper the flow and force of his argument, lessening the chances that, through meditation, it might impregnate the mind of his audience.

This monastic rhetoric is what distinguishes Anselm from the scholastic hordes that follow him. For, in the conflation of grammar and rhetoric, dialectic and rhetoric, and finally grammar and dialectic, this literary sensibility which meditation provided for the monk was somehow lost to the schools, a fact not lost on the leading figures of the Renaissance when the great conflagration of Scholasticism finally turned to embers. Yet, at the same time, Anselm brought to the ancient discipline of meditation an intellectual rigor that it had not encountered for centuries, if ever. If monastic theology was indeed
usually characterized by an “absence of complexity,”

then Anselm was a new breed of erudite monk, and one that would remain a rarity. Fortunate to exist at a time when just enough of Aristotle was in the intellectual waters to let him float to new heights, but not yet enough to force him to drown in innumerable technicalities, the Archbishop of Canterbury transformed meditation by injecting into it a syllogistic logic which had its own form of beauty and which could inscribe itself into the minds of prospective readers, albeit those who had the prerequisite intellectual capacities.

Before concluding, we must explore further one last element of Anselm’s oeuvre, that of his Letters. As detailed in Chapter 2, dictamen was the hallmark of literature in the eleventh century. Letters were not just a correspondence between interlocutors but were expected to be eventually published for a wider audience if the author was of considerable literary talent or position. The doctoral dissertation of Sister Loughlin is a seminal study of Anselm’s letters, and it demonstrates that Anselm’s writing is exceptional for what one of the chapter titles describes as “The Fusion of Speculative and Affective Elements (Ch. III).”

The letters of Anselm are as wide and varied in subject matter as they are in recipients and occasions. Some may deal with mundane matters of copying a work or organizing the abbey, while others are sent to Kings and Popes regarding important matters of state and church. Other letters are for personal matters as simple as missing a beloved friend, or to weigh in on a theological matter. And throughout his letter-writing, Anselm maintains his assuredness in logic, as well as his propensity for expression of emotion. The speculative matters of metaphysics are as an

348 Leclercq, 190.
appropriate subject for a letter as the psychological condition of a monk. Logic is still of
great importance even in the letters:

It would seem that the natural flow of thought that finds supple expression in
Anselm’s correspondence originates in a well-trained, meditative, highly
speculative mind. Although dialectic is not a primary tool here as in his
theological treatises, it is ever at work in his organization of ideas and on given
occasions, as illustrated by this analysis of the logical structure of his language,
the logical relations of his ideas take precedence in giving form to his thoughts.\textsuperscript{350}

The logical consistency of his philosophical writings is still present in his \textit{Letters}, in fact
it is a demarcating aspect of Anselm’s style.\textsuperscript{351}

Likewise, the emotive aspect of Anselm’s prayers is also found in the Letters, as
Loughlin remarks, “noteworthy for Anselm’s artistic manner of giving expression to the
anguish of spirit he experiences.”\textsuperscript{352} In this observation on \textit{Letter 84}, written to Gilbert
Crispin, she states “it reads almost like poetry.”\textsuperscript{353}

The fusion of speculative and affective becomes an important characteristic of
Anselm’s letters as a whole. In fact, she notes an interesting rhyme in \textit{Letter 53} to his
suffering friend Hernost, bishop of Rochester, that there is a poetic balance, “word for
word “\textit{contristate me humana maestitia meus affectus}” by “\textit{consolatur me spirituali
laetitia vester profectus};” “\textit{affectus}” represents the affective element and “\textit{profectus}” the
speculative, which are carefully registered at the end of each independent clause.”\textsuperscript{354} The
rhyme of \textit{affectus} with \textit{profectus} stands to illustrate Anselm’s talent in balancing his
original compositions of logical propositions with emotional conditions.

\textsuperscript{350} Ibid., 134.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid., 284. Loughlin notes that, “The uniquely Anselmian quality of his style is its logical
consistency; his clear perception of reality imparts spontaneity to his words.”
\textsuperscript{352} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{353} Ibid., 139.
\textsuperscript{354} Ibid., 139.
Loughlin will describe this fusion further, relating the *Letters* to the rest of Anselm’s corpus stating: “Anselm has the gift of precision; to it he adds the power of speaking the language of self-revelation. A new intensity of feeling informs the words that flow from his pen, whether in his prayers, meditations, treatises such as the Monologion or Proslogion, or letters.”\(^{355}\) This is attested to by the fact that Anselm will not utilize language in a way that distinguishes between what is proper for prose and for poetry, utilizing both in his *Letters*.\(^{356}\) As such Anselm demonstrates that he is a master in both philosophical expression and poetic beauty in the Latin language.\(^{357}\) Depending on the need, Anselm utilized precise logic or effusive emotion.\(^{358}\) Thus, time and time again, when describing Anselm’s work in the letters, the treatises, the prayers, and the dialogues, Loughlin argues that “Speculative consideration and affective motivation are harmoniously combined.”\(^ {359}\) As such, we see that the *Letters* demonstrate the same unity which the concept of meditation has brought to Anselm’s corpus. Poetry and philosophy are able not only to co-exist in the *Letters*, or Anselm’s work as a whole, but to mutually enhance.

**Conclusion**

The literary output of Anselm of Canterbury, although substantial, cannot be considered prodigious by medieval standards; yet, like all great artists and writers, his

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\(^{355}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{356}\) Ibid., 105.

\(^{357}\) Loughlin (p. 50) cites another authority saying, “Father de Ghellinck observes that none of his contemporaries employed Latin with a greater mastery in expressing the nuances of thought or wrote in such a beautiful Latin style.”

\(^{358}\) Ibid., 152. “While adapted from early Christian writers, especially Augustine, the affective elements of language which preserve moments of personal experience show a progressive enrichment. Antithetical expression proves congenial to his need for order and precision, […] He is thus capable of being precise or effusive at will.” Loughlin later observes (p. 157), “He is then precise or effusive where there is a need to be so.”

\(^{359}\) Loughlin, 145. Cf. 152, “the speculative and affective qualities are fused.”
body of work can be seen as a unity. Despite such diverse genres as prayers and abstract theological treatises, Anselm’s corpus is united in his singular desire for God. He was a fastidious logician, yet concomitantly utilized a monastic rhetoric that contained all the flourish of a poet. The latter was the way of monastic writers, for as Leclercq points out,

They feel no real conflict between the pursuit of art and the search for God, between rhetoric and the transcendence which is the essence of their vocation, between grammar and the desire for paradise. Rhetoric has become a part of them; and without becoming dual personalities, but remaining wholly uniquely monks, they are able to use it to give expression to their sincerity.  

Logic, in contrast, would become the hallmark of the future as Scholasticism began to assert the superiority of its intellectual acumen. Anselm stands in the middle, a bridge of sorts, called by some the father of Scholasticism, but more likely the apex of monastic theology. The quest for the Triune God through the discipline of meditatio characterized all of his major works. It must be remembered that the Meditation on Human Redemption was composed late in Anselm’s life, as a liturgical extension of the imposing Cur Deus Homo. To read one without its complement would be to miss the fact that their author saw as necessary both an intellectual understanding of the logical necessity of the Incarnation, as well as an experiential interaction with that very same truth in meditation. Anselm, therefore, never abandoned poetic expression of philosophic propositions. It would be unfortunate if we could not ascertain the corresponding reciprocal relationship existing between the prayers and theological treatises of Anselm’s literature. In this light, the Proslogion serves as a microcosm of his entire life’s output, with the collection of poetic prayers - in their emotional yearnings for redemption - juxtaposing yet complementing the logical discovery of theological truth in the treatises. Analyzing that

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360 Leclercq, 220.
work in greater detail for its poetic and philosophic elements becomes the focus of the
next chapter.
4. TOWARDS A WORD ON THE PROSLOGION

Anselm’s greatest achievement is usually considered to be the famous “single argument” which is the Proslogion. It is a work whose core argument is still taught in introductory courses to philosophy under the title of “The Ontological Argument.” However, it is also the subject of fierce debate since its first publication, not only whether or not the argument is valid or not, but also regarding what exactly the monk of Bec was actually trying to accomplish. From Aquinas to Descartes and Kant, from Barth to Russell and Plantinga, the greatest names in theology and philosophy have attempted to wrestle through Anselm’s original idea. The fact that this controversial argument is part of an incredibly complex poetic document only complicates the matter further. In this chapter, we will analyze the poetic and dialectic aspects of the Proslogion independently, concluding with a poetic/dialectic synthetic approach which demonstrates the Proslogion is a unique instance of the prosimetrum genre, taking it further, and a testament to both the truth and beauty of theological language. In Anselm there is no adversity between verse and verity.

4.1 Proslogion Poetics

The prayers of Anselm, as analyzed in Chapter 3, displayed an intricate poetic style, characterized by rhyme, assonance, alliteration, anaphora, balance, imagery, and psychological insight. This linguistic acumen is demonstrated just as powerfully in
Anselm’s most famous work, the *Proslogion*. In fact, the *Proslogion* can and should be regarded as a rather extensive poem. Vanderjagt is explicit on this matter stating: “One of the things that strikes the reader of Anselm of Canterbury most is his concise but evocative Latin style, which in its economy of words often seems akin to the best minimal music or poetry. Read correctly and printed on the page as it ought to be, the *Proslogion*, to a large extent, is actually a poem.”  

Miller agrees, arguing that although there are some differences, the work is indeed poetic. He states, “Despite certain modifications of the prayer form in the *Proslogion*, namely its length and the level of inclusion of logical argument within it, it basically has all the elements of his other prayers.”

Following the lead of these assessments, this study turns towards an analysis of the poetic elements of the *Proslogion*, both the form of the work, as well as its content, on both a micro and macro scale. In other words, it is important to analyze the forms Anselm uses, on the micro scale of a given chapter, but also in regard to how the poetic techniques by which he arranges the entire work. Likewise, the content of the *Proslogion* poetry must be looked at in the context of smaller stanzas and chapters, and in line with the macro scale of the piece as a whole. Thankfully, there have been some excellent recent studies of these elements of the *Proslogion*, which are very helpful in this project.

For many years the poetic dimension of the *Proslogion* was neglected due to the attention paid to the logical argumentation of Chapters 2-3 (and later 4). In her English translation, Benedicta Ward helped gave attention to its poetic nature, putting some of it

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362 Richard Miller, 74.
into modern poetic lines to help emphasize the fact that Anselm’s writing took on a more aesthetic character.\textsuperscript{363} In fact, she grouped it with the poetry of the prayers and poems, thus giving English readers a revised sense of Anselm’s work as a whole. Vanderjagt seems to follow her lead in pointing out “the poetic sections are ch. 1, the middle of ch. 9, ch. 14, ch. 16 and ch. 26.”\textsuperscript{364} Ward’s translation reflects this assessment, but also gives a poetic rendering to the second half of Chapter 18. The German translation of Frommann-Holzboog, part of the Latin text of these same chapters were rendered in poetic lines (although only the end of Chapters 14, 16, and 26); in addition the poetic layout was also applied to the entirety of Chapter 17, the first half of Chapter 18, the second half of Chapter 24, and the first half of Chapter 25.\textsuperscript{365} Thus, there is a scholarly attestation to at least nine of the twenty-six chapters containing what would be considered poetry by modern standards. Furthermore, both the beginning (Chapter 1) and end (Chapters 24-26) of the work are certainly heavily poetic, creating an \textit{inclusio} while the middle chapters (14, 16, 17, 18) also take an obvious poetic form. The beginning-middle-ending structure of clear poetic elements is important to note, and will map onto some of the framing considerations considered below.

As a whole, the \textit{Proslogion} follows the general pattern of the \textit{Prayers}, withdrawal into solitude, rousing the mind to contemplate God, two stages of compunction (1. horror of sin due to God’s love; 2. desire for God), and the Vision of God.\textsuperscript{366} Miller argues that Anselm never addresses why he uses the prayer format because it was one “his audience

\textsuperscript{364} Vanderjagt, “Performative Heart,” 229.
\textsuperscript{366} Richard Miller, 74.
would have known very well and whose pattern they would have recognized from the
prayers he had been writing for the past eight years. In terms of overall structure, the
bulk of these aspects mirroring the Orationes are found Chapter 1, while the final Vision
of God is largely the concern of Chapter 26. The work begins and ends with poetry. As
both the introduction and conclusion of the work proper are highly poeticized, they
deserve detailed attention.

The Proslogion begins with a poetic dare to tear away from care:

Eia nunc, homuncio,
fuge paululum occupationes tuas,
absoconde temodicum
   a tumultuosis cogitationibus tuis.
Abice nunc onerosas curas.
et postpone laboriosas distentiones tuas.
Vac a aliquantulum deo,
Et requiesce aliquantulum in eo.

Quick now little man,
   run away from your little occupations,
hide away a little time
   to yourself from your tumultuous intentions.
Throw away now onerous concerns,
   and postpone your laborious distention.
Be unoccupied a little while for God,
   and quiet down a little while in Him.

This introduction addresses the author himself, and the reader simultaneously, with
the rhyming nunc homuncio. This is followed with verbs rhyming the final syllable -
fuge, absconde, abice, postpone - calling for fleeing the busyness of life. Rhymes are
also used to pair the cares themselves paululum occupationes, tumultuosis cogitationibus,
onerosas curas, laboriosas distentiones. The dense poetic structure includes the use of
the second person pronoun to complete lines, in the fashion of the Psalms (tuas/tuis/tuas).

367 Ibid., 75.
Thus, it begins with a busy and complicated stanza, the structure itself reflecting the very ‘onerous’ and ‘laborious’ concerns which are to be abandoned.

And then the theme of seeking God is introduced, with more simple rhymes and repetitions:

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“Intra in cubiculum” mentis tuae,
exclude omnia praeter deum
et quae te iuuent ad quaerendum eum,
et “clauso ostio” quaere eum.

Dic nunc, totum “cor meum”,
dic nunc deo:
Quaero uultum tuum;
 uultum tuum, domine, requiro.
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Enter into the cubicle of your mind,
exclude all things except God,
and that which may help you to seek Him,
and, the entrance having been shut up, seek Him.

Say now, my whole heart,
say now to God:
“I quest for Your face;
Your face, Lord, I request.”

This section is built around quotes from Scripture (indicated by underline) and introduces the theme and key words that will dominate the entire work. First is the concept of “seeking God.” Second is the language of “heart”, and finally the concept of the Lord’s “face.” The entirety of the Proslogion, it will be discovered, involves seeking God’s face with one’s whole heart. In fact, the rest of Chapter 1 is simply a poetic building upon this, asking God to “teach my heart where and how to seek you.”

As he continues, the problem for the writer is that God lives in “inaccessible light” (a Scriptural concept) and so doesn’t know what God’s face looks like. This dilemma is actually built into a play on words between the Latin for “face” [facies] and “to do” [facio]:
Numquam te uidi,
domine deus meus,
non noui faciem tuam.

Quid faciet, altissime domine,
quid faciet iste tuus longinquus exsul?
Quid faciet seruus tuus anxius amore tui
et longe proiectus “a facie tua”?

Anhelat uidere te,
et nimis abest illi facies tua.

Accedere ad te desiderat,
et inaccessibilis est habitatio tua.

Inuenire te cupit,
et nescit locum tuum.

Quaerere te affectat, et ignorat uultum tuum.

Domine, deus meus es, et dominus meus es,
et numquam te uidi.

I have never seen you,
Lord mine Divine,
I have not recognized Your face.
What will he do, Highest Lord?
What will this far off, distant exile do?
What will Your servant do, anxious to love You,
and cast far off from Your face?

He pants to see You,
but is very far removed from that, Your face.
He desires to come near You,
but Your home is inaccessible.
He loves to discover You,
but does not know Your place.
He aspires to seek You, but he is ignorant of Your face.
Lord, You are mine Divine, and You are my Lord,
but I have never seen You.

The stanza utilizes the inclusio of numquam te uidi and Domine, deus meus to frame the whole piece, addressing God directly in prayer, but lamenting the fact that he has never seen his Lord. The emotion of the quest for God’s face is made apparent with verbs of longing, panting, desiring, loving, aspiring. He is anxious, a distant exile, cast off far from the face of God. This is a love poem, with true passion, anxiety and hurt, but the love of a creature for the Creator.
The poem goes into the “unfortunate Fall” of humanity, and its inability to see the
God it was made to see. The language is desperate, speaking of misery and pain,
punctuated with apostrophe such as, “O unfortunate fate of man […] O duress and direst
Fall that!” It is cast in terms of eating and owning:

“Manducabat” tunc “homo panem angelorum”
quem nunc esurit,
manducat nunc “panem dolorum”,
quem tunc nesciebat.
Heu publicus luctus hominum,
uniuersalis planctus filiorum Adae!
Ille ructabat saturitate,
Nos suspiramus esurie.
Ille abundabat, nos mendicamus.

Once man ate the bread of angels,
now he is the hungry one.
Now he eats the bread of sorrow,
which once he did not know.
Alas! The public grievance of man,
the universal bereavement of the sons of Adam!
That man belched with satiation,
now we ourselves suspire with emaciation.
That man prospered, we go begging.

The loss of humanity is not simply a loss of property or ability, it is the loss of God:

A patria in exsilium,
a uisione dei in caecitatem nostram.
A iucunditate immortalitatis
in amaritudinem et horrorem mortis.
Miseram mutatam!
De quanto bono in quantum malum!
Graue damnum, grauis dolor, graue totum

From native land to exile,
from a vision of God to our blindness!
From amiability of immortality
to harshness and horror of post-mortem.
Miserable mutation!
From how great a good to how great an evil!
Grave damage, grave pain, grave everything.
This “miserable mutation” results in a loss of “vision of God” and ends in the
graveness of the grave. The use of rhyme and alliteration throughout is masterful,
Anselm is expressing the deepest misery in beautiful poetry, and the emotions of the
reader are indeed stirred. The pain of lost aspirations is expressed in sighs or
suspirations. At a certain point, the poet can no longer take it and cries out accusingly to
God:

Et o “tu, domine, usquequo”?  
“Usquequo, domine, obliuisceris” nos, 
“usquequo auertis faciem tuam” a nobis? 
Quando respicies et exaudies nos?  
Quando illuminabis oculos nostros,  
et ostendes nobis “faciem tuam”?  

Oh! And You, Lord - How long?  
How long, Lord, will You forget us,  
How long do You turn Your face from us?  
When will You look back at us and hear us?  
When will You illuminate our eyes,  
and reveal Your face to us?

Anselm uses the Psalms of God to point out that it is up to God to give illumination to the
eyes of those who seek Him so they can finally see His face. He repeats his request again
shortly afterwards, “Look back Lord, and hear clearly, illuminate us, and reveal Yourself
to us.” This concept of illumination is key to understanding the entire work, for it is God
himself that gives access to the Light by which we can see his face. His light is
inaccessible, and only He can give access to it.

Three times Anselm will cry out “I implore, Lord!” He utilizes again the image
of hunger and wealth:

Obsecro, domine,  
ne desperem suspirando sed respirem sperando.  
Obsecro, domine,  
amaricatum est cor meum sue desolatione,
I implore, Lord,
may I not give up hope expiring, but respire hoping.
I implore, Lord,
may my heart has grown bitter by its desolation,
sweeten it by Your consolation.
I implore, Lord, I began hungering to search for You,
may I not finish by fasting from You.
I proceeded famished, may I not recede diminished.
A pauper, I have come to a rich man,
a miserable man to a merciful man;
may I not return vacuous and contemptuous.

And if I expire before I eat,
indeed, after suspirations, allow that I may eat.

There is a desperation in these cries that underlines the existential reason Anselm has begun his quest for God’s face here in writing. He is over-burdened by the pain of not seeing God. He utilizes an interesting metaphor to describe his miserable situation:

**Domine, incuruatus**
*non possum nisi deorsum aspicere,*
erige me ut possim sursum intendere.

Lord, having been made back-bowed,
I am unable to behold except below,
erect me in order that I may hold out on high.

Anselm isn’t even capable of looking up to God, his own face is staring straight at the ground because his back is bent by burdens. He needs God to straighten his posture if he wishes to see the face of the Lord. Again it is divine initiative that is needed before proceeding:
Doce me quaerere te,
et ostende te quaerenti;
quia nec quaerere te possum nisi tu doceas,
 nec inuenire nisi te ostendas.
Quaeram te desiderando, desiderem quaerendo.
Inueniam amando, amem inueniendo.

Teach me to seek You,
and reveal Yourself for seeking;
since am I able to neither seek You unless You teach,
nor find unless You reveal Yourself.
May I seek You by desiring, and desire You by seeking.
May I discover by loving, and love by discovering.

Anselm here is repeating Plato’s famous quandary in the Meno, of what comes first: desire or knowledge. He knows that he learns of God in seeking, but he cannot seek unless he is taught how. His declaration that he will ‘discover by loving and love by discovering” is an example of sermo appositis, a figure of speech beloved by Anselm. In the end the language of “desire” and “love” is paired with “seeking” and “discovering” and the inversion creates a poetic paradox of knowledge.

This theme continues as the monk concludes by sudden outburst of praise towards God, and recapitulation of the Fall’s effect, and a final meditation on the relation of believing to understanding:

Fateor, domine, et gratias ago,
quia creasti in me hanc imaginem tuam,
ut tu memor te cogitem, te amem.
Sed sic est abolita attritione uitorum,
sic est offuscata fumo peccatorum,
ut non possit facere ad quod facta est,
nisi tu renoues et reformes eam.
Non ento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam,
quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum;
sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere ueritatem tuam,
quam credit et amat cor meum.
Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam
sed credo ut intelligam.
Nam et hoc credo:
quia “nisi credidero, non intelligam”.

I praise, Lord, and thank with thanksgiving,
   because You have created in me this, Your image,
   in order that I may imagine You, be mindful of You, love You.
But having been so abolished by the abrasion of sin,
   so obfuscated by the fumes of sin,
   it is unable to do that for which it is made,
   unless You would restore and reform it.
I do not attempt, Lord, to penetrate Your altitude,
   because my aptitude in nowise compares to that;
but I desire to understand up to a point Your Truth,
   which my heart believes and loves.
Nor do I seek to understand in order to believe,
   but I believe in order to understand.
For even this I believe:
   That unless I believe, I will not understand.

Again, this conclusion is filled with rhyme and strategic repetition of phrases and key words. The final lines point to the fact that Anselm has a restrained hope, a realistic objective, “I desire to understand up to a point Your Truth, which my heart believes and loves.” From the beginning, he recognizes that he can never completely understand the Truth of God, but he loves and believes in the Truth, and wants to understand what he can, and believes that only belief will help him understand even that little he is able.

Let us know turn to the next section which is most regularly pointed out for its poetic quality, Chapter 9. In the middle of the chapter we see Anselm exclaim in the figure of apostrophe, again utilizing the play of nominative and adjectival forms that makes up sermon appositis:

   O misericordia,
   de quam opulenta dulcedine
      et dulci opulentia nobis profluis!
O immensitas bonitatis dei,
   quo affectu amanda es peccatoribus!

   O mercy,
   of what opulent sweetness
and sweet opulence flows to us.
O immense God of Goodness,
where loving affection is for transgressors.

The language is effusive, praising a God who can be both merciful and just in ways which humanity may not understand. At times, the rhyme structures are magnificent, bordering on what the French refer to as holorime, where every word in a line rhymes with another. That is seen especially in three couplets:

Iustos enim saluas iustitia comitante,
istos uero liberas iustitia damnante.
Illos meritis adiuuantibus,
illos meritis repugnantibus.
Illos bona quae dedisti cognoscendo,
istos male quae odisti ignoscendo.

For you saved the just whom justice commends,
truly freeing those whom justice condemns:
these by merit sustained,
those although merit disdained,
these by cognizing the good you dedicated,
those by not recognizing the evil you hated.

The use of iustos, illos and istos to begin each line creates a sequence with its own structure, and the balance of rhyming three couplets within that structure, each having two or three multisyllabic words in parallel rhyme forms shows the hand of a master poet.

What is striking about this entire middle section of Chapter 9 is that Anselm is overcome by the immensity of the attributes of his Subject, and seems unable to contain himself from breaking into spontaneous yet intricate poetic praise. The back and forth play of iustia and misericordia in the poetic lines reflects the very difficulty of balancing these concepts in the person of God himself:

O immense bonitas,
quae sic omnem intellectum excedis,
ueniat super me misericordia ilia,
quae de tanta opulentia tui procedit!
Influat in me, quae profluit de te!
Parce per clementiam,
ne ulciscaris per iustitiam!
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 uere concordat iustitiae.
Nempe si misericors es quia es summe bonus,
et summe bonus non es nisi quia es summe iustus:
ue re idcirco es misericors,
quia summe iustus es.

O immense Goodness,
who exceeds all intelligence,
may that mercy come over me
which of such opulence you proceed!
Infill in me what flows from you!
Sparingly by clemency,
not avenging by justice!
For although it is difficult to understand
how your mercy is not absent from your justice,
yet it is necessary to believe,
because by no means justice withstands what exudes from goodness,
which is nothing without justice,
indeed, truthfully concords with justice.
Truly, if mercy is what is the greatest good,
and the greatest good is nothing except what is the greatest justice:
thruthfully, on that account, it is mercy
which is the greatest justice.

And not to treat the subject simply as an abstract concept, Anselm finishes the section crying repeatedly for God’s help:

Adiuua me,
iuste et misericors deus,
cuius lucem quaero,
adiuua me,
ut intelligam quod dico.
Vere ergo ideo misericors es,
quia iustus.

Aid me,
just and merciful God,
whose light I seek,
Aid me,
to understand what I say.
Truly therefore, for that reason you are merciful,
because just.

The direct address, denoting the very attributes, is an appeal for help to even understand what he has just said. The rhymes on “–o” [quaero, dico, ergo ideo] are a gentle balance to the repetition.

In this sequence we see the exalted poetic reaction to the didactic interaction of the meditative mind with its God. It jockeys back and forth with mercy and justice, creating a poetic balance that reflects the balance of the attributes themselves.

The poetry of Chapter 14 is also important as it begins the second half of the work by returning to a direct address of God as in Chapter 1. In fact, the first lines are asking God if he has found what he asked for in that poetic introduction. It asks “O my soul, have you found what you were looking for?” Has the Face of God been discovered?

Anselm lays out in summarizing fashion a poetic list of what he’s discovered in his writing thus far:

I found something that is highest of all,
Which a greater cannot be thought,
And this is the very life, light, wisdom, goodness,
Eternal blessedness, and blessed eternity,
And this is ubiquitous and omni-temporal.

But having discovered all this, Anselm still wonders why he wants more, why he isn’t experiencing what he has found.

Si uero inuenisti:
quid est, quod non sentis quod inuenisti?
Cur non te sentit, domine deus,
anima mea, si inuenit te?

If truly you have found,
Why is it, that you do not experience what you have found? 
Why does it not experience you, Lord God, 
my soul, if it finds you?

The repetition of finding and experiencing, emphasizes the conundrum, the lack of experience of the reality the mind is seeking. This leads Anselm back into the depressive expressions:

*Domine deus meus,*
*formator et reformator meus,*
*dic desideranti animae meae,*
*quid aliud es, quam quod uidit,*
*ut pure uideat, quod desiderat.*

Lord mine divine,  
my former, and reformer,  
speak, my soul is desiring,  
what You are other than this, which I saw,  
in order that it may clearly see what it desires.

He can’t understand “Why this Lord, why this?” The answer comes in a flurry of rhymes:

*Tenebratur oculus eius infirmitate sua,*  
aut reuerberatur fulgor tuo?  
Sed certe et tenebratur in se, et reuerberatur a te.  
Utique et obscuratur sue breuitate,  
et obruitur tua immensitate.

Is this eye darkened by its infirmity,  
or lashed by your glory?  
But certainly it is darkened in itself, and lashed by you.  
Certainly obscured by its brevity,  
and buried by your immensity.

Both sin and God’s grandeur make experiencing Him difficult. Seeing the light beyond what he has already discovered, will prove a formidable task for Anselm. He again lists some of the things which shows God limitless, compared to mans limitations, concluding:
Quid puritatis, quid simplicitatis, quid certitudinis et splendoris ibi est. Certe plus quam a creatura ualeat intelligi.

What purity, what simplicity, what certainty and splendor is here. Certainly more than a creature can understand.

Anselm uses the poetry of Chapter 14 to help capture the grandeur of the God whom he cannot see. Its beauty helps us to see why we cannot see God, his splendor is beyond even what rhymes and poetry can capture. We see God in these lines only superficially, not officially; a little bit of the unlimited, but certainly not all we wish to see! And so Chapter 14 introduces the second half of the Proslogion, with a decidedly via negativa twist.

The sections rendered by poetry in Ward’s translation of Chapters 16 and 18 are likewise dedicated to topics which are unfathomable to the human mind. Chapter 16 again touches on the topic of the “inaccessible light” which human eyes cannot see or human minds understand. It ends with the desperate lack of experience that he still desires:

Intra me et circa me es,
et non te sentio.

You are in me and encircle me,
and I do not experience you.

The latter half of Chapter 18 returns to listing the attributes of God, but again offers a difficulty – the human mind cannot hold all of the attributes together in one glance to enjoy them all at once.

Nullae igitur partes sunt in te, domine,nec es plura sed sic es unum quiddam et idem tibi ipsi,ut in nullo tibi ipsi sis dissimilis;immo tu es ipsa unitas, nullo intellectu diuisibilis.
In no way, therefore, are parts in you, Lord,
    Nor are you many but, in another way,
you are one thing and the same in yourself the actual one,
in order that you are in no way dissimilar in yourself the actual one;
    No indeed you are the very actual one unity,
in no way intellectually divisible.

We break God up but he cannot truly be broken into pieces, he is One and simple.

Anselm writes this realization in a poetic fashion that is difficult to translate to the same affect. The repetition of *nullae/nullo* brings a unity of denial, while the repetition of the rhyming phrase *tibi ipsi* and accompanying iteration of *ipsa* brings a unity of the actual oneness of God being discussed. The rhymes *sis, dissimilis, divisibilis*, emphasize the united denial of God’s divisibility, whereas the rhyme of *partes* at the start of the section with *unites* in the final line serve to further accent the lack of parts, and resulting unity which is the point of the sentence. The final declaration of intellects not understanding how to divide God as subject, furthers the *via negativa* of the second half of the work as a whole. Again a poetic rendition of the inability of the human mind to experience God.

The fulfillment of the experience of God comes in the poetic Chapter 26, and then again, it is only partial. Anselm asks God to tell him if the description of joy in Chapter 25 is the “joy” that Jesus spoke about. He recognizes that he has found a fullness of joy, that fills his whole heart, mind, and soul, but that even further joy remains. He has come to experience the joy of God, but also experiences the reality that he will never experience the fullness of the joy, because the Joy is God himself, who is beyond comprehension. Thus joy, and love, and knowledge are all linked together in the inconceivable, yet receivable, nature of God himself. And yet this joy, love, and knowledge is still only circumspect, and much more remains for future fulfillment:
Utique tantum gaudebunt, quantum amabunt; 
tantum amabunt, quantum cognoscent.
Quantum te cognoscent, domine, tunc; et quantum te amabunt?
Certe “nec oculus uidit, nec auris auduit, 
nec in cor hominis ascendit” in hac uita, 
quantum te cognoscent et amabunt in illa uita.

Certainly, as far as they will rejoice, so much they will love; 
As far as they will love, so much will they know.
How much will they know You, Lord, then, and how much will they love You?
Certainly, “neither eye has seen, nor ear heard,
Nor the human heart ascended to” in this life,
how much they will know you and love you in that life.

Anselm builds from 1 Cor. 2:9 to assert that as much as he has arrived at more joy, love, 
and knowledge, even more awaits. And so, the writer turns in the final stanza of the work 
to pray for even further depths now and towards the day to come:

Oro, deus, cognoscam te, amem te, ut gaudeam de te.
Et si non possum in hac uita ad plenum,
uel proficiam in dies usque dum ueniat illud ad plenum.
Proficiat hic in me notitia tui, et ibi fiat plena;
Crescat amor tuus, et ibi sit plenus:
ut hic gaudium meum sit in spe magnum,
et ibi sit in re plenum.
Domine, per filium tuum inbes immo consulis petere et promittis accipere,
“ut gaudium” nostrum “plenum sit”.
Peto, domine, quod consulis per admirabilem consiliarium nostrum;
Accipiam quod promittis per ueritatem tuam,
“ut gaudium” meum “plenum sit”.
Deus uerax, peto accipiam,
“ut gaudium” meum “plenum sit”.
Meditetur interim inde mens mea,
loquatur inde lingua mea.
Amet illud cor meum,
sermocinetur os meum.
Esuriat illud anima mea,
sitiat caro mea,
desideret tota substantia mea,
donec intrem “in gaudium domini” mei,
“qui est” trinus et unus deus “benedictus in saecula.
Amen”.

I pray, God, may I know you, love you, in order that I may rejoice in you. And if not possible in this life to the fullest, may I even progress in days all the way until that one of fullness comes. Progress here in me knowledge of you, and there may it be in fullness. Increase love of you, and there may it be full, in order that here my joy is in a great hope, and there it is in a full reality.

Lord, by your Son you commanded, no indeed, counseled to petition, and promise to receive, in order that our joy will be full.

I petition, Lord, what you counsel by your admirable counselor; may I receive what you promise by your truth, in order that my joy may be full.

Truthful God, I petition may I receive, in order that my joy may be full.

In the interim, may my mind meditate thereupon, may my tongue speak thereupon.

May my heart love, may my mouth discuss that.

May my soul be hungry for, my heart be thirsty for, my total substance desire that, until I may enter into the joy of my Lord, who is triune and one God blessed into the ages. Amen.

The crescendo builds with the repetition of the scriptural refrain, “that my joy may be full.” Anselm asks to know, love, and rejoice in God to the fullest, and because that is not possible in this life, to grow in those three areas until in the final days, he can have knowledge, love, and joy in full. Thus the Proslogion ends with a refrain crying for knowledge, love, and joy of God, even as it began. Yet it is not that the exercise of meditation has been in vain, for in fact, Anselm, and his readers have discovered many things, and experienced God more fully. But the quest remains, and indeed, will remain until the day of the Lord’s return.

As such, this sense of longing, of desire, for God saturates the entire work. Poetry is not just part of the work, it is at the centre and heart of the piece. The project begins
and ends in desire for God. This makes sense of the title Anselm finally settled on for the work – *Proslogion* – towards the Word. For it is a work that aims at coming closer to being able to speak a word about God, but even more to draw closer towards the Word himself, Jesus Christ, the second person in the Trinity.

Before concluding this poetic analytic it is important to further address the question of the poetic structure of the work as a whole. Two important studies have introduced considerable complexity into the structure of the *Proslogion*. First, the linguistic analysis of Overton attempts a rigorous analytic of the deep structure of Anselm’s most famous work, and highlights some important details.\(^{368}\) At the heart of his analysis is the overlapping set of three frames based upon chapter clusters: the global framing (1-26 around joy, 2-25 around love, 2-4 around illumination), the philosophical framing (2-4), and the theological framing (4-15-26).\(^{369}\) The first global frame centers on the request and fulfillment for God to “teach my heart”, which is fulfilled in Chapter 26 when his heart (as well as mind, soul, and person) are filled with joy.\(^{370}\) Frame 2 of the global framing is found in the relation of Chapters 2 and 25, which centres around Anselm’s initial request to have understanding of his faith, which is fulfilled in the experience of love.\(^{371}\) The third global frame is found in the relation of Chapter 2 to Chapter 4, which finds another experience of understanding faith through the illumination of the mind.\(^{372}\) This global framing becomes the centre of a complicated system of “metrical relations” between the frames.\(^{373}\) Overton explains:

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\(^{369}\) Ibid., 71-75ff.

\(^{370}\) Ibid., 76.

\(^{371}\) Ibid., 77.

\(^{372}\) Ibid. 78.

\(^{373}\) Ibid., 81.
This poetic structure reticulates relationships across triads of traditional theological categories:

1) faith, teaching, understanding
2) joy, love, illumination
3) person, heart, mind

In our previous analysis, it became clear that desire for the joy and love and knowledge [illumination] of God drove the poetic energy of both the beginning and the end of the work, as well as other poetic texts like chaps. 9, 14, and 18. Overton’s analysis helps to further highlight the structural importance this triad of desire holds for the entire *Proslogion*. In paralleling this with the triads of soul (person), heart and mind, as well as faith, teaching, and understanding, a complex poetic structure comes to the surface, that the combinations between these terms “permit 27 (3^3) major categories of relations, thus providing in specific structural terms, flexible but traditionally acceptable boundaries for devotional experience.”

Overton’s research is important in that it shows the complexity of the poetic structure that governs the *Proslogion* as a whole. These three triads intersect throughout the document in a multitude of ways and enhance the experiential component of the entire work. The fact that they are three triads is important as a reflection of the fact that Anselm is of course working in the framework of a Triune Christian God. As such, the number three will take an important thematic role in the work. This is seen in further detail in Overton’s exceptional analysis of Chapter 26. Through complicated structural analyses of the use of pronouns, both explicit (ex. *mei, me, mea, meus, te, tuas*, etc) or implicit (as every Latin verb contains an implicit subject), we see groupings of threes.

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374 Ibid., 82.
375 Ibid.
The section begins with a triad of explicit pronouns evoking God in the first sentence (te, te, te). Yet the very end of the entire work, there is an anaphora of eight phrases ending with first person pronouns (mea, mea, meum, meum, mea, mea, mea, mei). Overton makes evident,

In this grouping the pronoun ego predominates, and beginning in Sentence 17, occurs at the end of every phrase for 8 consecutive iterations. Since Latin is fully-declined, this-word order is irrefutably intended—since it is gratuitous semantically, syntactically, and grammatically—and suggests the location and importance of human agency, as indeed very important, until the definitively last phrase, in which the pattern is reversed and God’s agency completes the phrase, sentence, chapter, and Proslogion, with the invocation of the Trinity.\(^{376}\)

The section also begins and ends with God, addressed three times as te initially, and finally once as Triune.

Other echoes of the Trinity in this chapter include the thematic address of the three persons – God (Father), Lord (Son), and Counselor (Spirit) - which Overton links explicitly to John 16 where God’s truth is promised by the Son in the Counselor. This, of course, is driven home by the three-fold repetition of John 16: 24 “that [my/our] joy may be full.” The Trinitarian overtone is carried further in the repetition of the entire work’s major triadic theme of knowing, loving, and enjoying.\(^{377}\)

Another important structural analysis of the Proslogion as a whole, is presented by Corbin, who puts the work into an over-arching chiastic structure.\(^{378}\) Chiastic structure is an ancient technique of ordering any size of linguistic unit, from a single sentence, to an entire book, by paralleling the beginning (A) with the ending (A’), the

\(^{376}\) Overton, 137.

\(^{377}\) To summarize Chapter 26 Overton (p. 166) states: “Framing structures, pronominal substructures, semantic mappings from classical Christian concepts to Biblical references, and explicit invocation of the Trinity create a repeated, multi-channel crescendo effect for a Trinitarian argument for the nature of the divine.” In Overton’s analysis, the Trinitarian structure is further reflected in how he divides each of the three major frames (global, philosophical, and theological) into a further three sub-parts (cf. 168).

\(^{378}\) Michel Corbin, *Saint Anselme* (Paris: Cerf, 2004), 225
second part (B) with the penultimate (B’), and so on. This can be done with any number of mirroring parts until the central point is reached in the middle of the structure, to which there is no parallel unit. Thus a given poetic structure might be seen chiastically as A, B, C, D, C’, B’, A’ – where D is the central point in the structure.

Corbin breaks the *Proslogion* into the following chiastic structure, with Chapter 15 at the focal point:

A – Ch. 1: Prayer  
B – Chs. 2-4: Reality of Divine Existence  
C – Chs. 5-12: God is what we believe him to be  
D – Ch. 13: Eternity/Boundlessness  
E – Ch. 14: “Inaccessible light”  
F – Ch. 15: God is greater than can be conceived  
E’ – Chs.16-18: “Inaccessible light”  
D’ – Chs. 19-21: Eternity/Boundlessness  
C’ – Ch. 22: God is what we believe him to be  
B’ – Ch. 23-25: Nature of Divine Existence  
A’ – Ch. 26: Prayer

Chiastic structures were Biblical commonplaces, found often in the Psalms, and Anselm would certainly be aware of and appreciative of their literary power. Thus, upon first investigation, this analysis has a lot to offer, as we have already noted the verbal and structural similarity between Chapter 1 and 26. Likewise, paralleling the three chapters of 2-4 with 23-25 strikes an interesting note as one is dealing in both with the Divine Existence per se. However, one starts to wonder if pairing the eight chapters between 5-12 with the single chapter 22 has an adequate poetic sensibility, or if one is just stretching to make the work fit a chiastic paradigm. Likewise, the phrase “Inaccessible light” is actually found in Chapter 1, Chapter 9 and Chapter 16 explicitly. Chapter 14 does contain the theme of light, as does Chapter 16, and Chapter 17 mentions *luce* briefly at the beginning, while Chapter 18 twice invokes the concept of “light.” The fact that
Chapters 1 and 9 also deal with light explicitly draws questions as to whether or not Chapter 14 is meant to parallel the multiple Chapters 16-18 based on that concept. What seems most striking is the lopsided way in which one chapter is repeatedly said to be balanced by multiple chapters, a form of disproportionality that Anselm’s medieval sensibilities may have found uncomfortable.

Nevertheless, Nelis will agree with this structure, and making Chapter 15 the centre of the entire Proslogion in the chiasm. Interestingly, Overton also gave Chapter 15 a central role, but as the centre of the Theological Framing only (Chapters 4-25). They cite its unusual short length as marking it out as unique in the work. However, this overlooks the fact that Chapter 12 is equally as short and striking. The importance of Chapter 15 is indeed not to be underestimated, but there may be something to be found in its proportionality with Chapter 12, and the tight thematic unity with Chapters 13 and 14 as well. When one also takes into consideration the importance of numerical proportionality to the medieval mindset in literary construction, another chiastic structure might be suggested:

A – Ch. 1: Love, Joy, Illumination  
  B – Chs. 2-4: Reality of Divine Existence  
  C – Chs. 5-11: God is what we believe him to be (via positiva)  
  D – Chs. 12-15: God Without Limit Beyond Thought  
  C′ – Ch. 16-22: God is what we believe him to be (via negativa)  
  B′ – Ch. 23-25: Nature of Divine Existence  
  A′ – Ch. 26: Love, Joy, Illumination

In this iteration, there is a numerical structure to the work based upon chapters that follows a pattern of 1-3-7-4-7-3-1. As the numbers, 1, 3, and 7 are used in the Bible for structuring literary poetics, such a use by Anselm would not be extraordinary.

Furthermore, this structure also respects the fact that the 26 chapters can be divided into
two thirteen chapter halves; or again in more biblical numerology, an introduction, 12 chapters, 12 chapters, and a conclusion. This is important because Chapters 1 and 14 have an affinity that most certainly must be regarded as part of the poetic structure. They both ask the question of whether or not Anselm has found that for which he was looking.

The four central Chapters 12-15 are grouped together as they represent a transition from a positive usage of comparison to the earthly domain, to a negative comparison – a transition from the traditional via positiva to the mystical via negatica. Chapter 12 is an affirmation of the ways in which God is uniquely selfsubsisting, the very life by which he lives, knowledge by which he knows, and goodness by which he is good. Chapter 13 is the last of the affirmations, pressing the limits of positive predication by saying God is the only unlimited entity in existence, incomparable to “created spirits.” This final positive affirmation leads Anselm in Chapter 14 to cry out whether he has found what he was looking for, and declaring God is beyond what he has seen in his striving, because God is bedazzling, and ultimately, “more than a creature can understand.” This final line leads to Chapter 15’s short yet powerful declaration that God “is greater than it is possible to think about.” In this analysis, one might be tempted to break the four chapters into two 12-13 and 14-15, but this may not properly relay the unity in which the two shortest chapters (12 and 15) are connected by poetic reflections which are testing the limits of human conception (14-15), precisely because God is limitless (12-14). God is found in the unity of positive and negative theology.379

379 This climactic inner grouping of four chapters can be taken as a whole unit (4), or divided evenly on the positive/negative axis (2-2), or taking chapters 13 and 14 as a special inner unit (1-2-1). That these three possibilities reflect Anselm’s predilection for the number three brings up an interesting question of just how far this phenomenon reflects authorial intention.
In conclusion, the *Proslogion* demonstrates poetic characteristics both on the micro level where individual stanzas display numerous poetic techniques, imagery, and an intense emotional dimension, and on the macro level where overarching triadic themes including love, knowledge, and joy dictate the entire work’s structure, including possible chiastic arrangement. In the preceding poetic analytic Anselm’s *Proslogion* has been proven to contain a poetic dimension through rhyme, alliteration, balance, and parallelism, which undergirds the overwhelming role that desire to see God’s face plays in the composition as a whole. As such, the *Proslogion* can be considered to parallel the *Orationes et Meditationes*, and fulfill an analogous function in the life of the reader.

### 4.2 *Proslogion* Logic

The philosophic impact of the *Proslogion* is hard to over-estimate. Immediately it caused a stir and an emphatic refutation by the monk Gaunilo. The heart of Chapter 2 seems to have become part of textbook compilations of philosophical arguments concerning God, to the effect that St. Thomas Aquinas also addressed and rejected the version of the argument he received during his education. Aquinas’ contemporary, Bonaventure, however, embraced Anselm’s argument and give it a place in his *Journey into the Mind of God*. Thus, from its early reception, the *Proslogion* has been viewed as a work of philosophical assertion by the greatest of thinkers, although the reaction to its content was already divided.

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To embark on a dialectic analytic of the *Proslogion* it is important to first investigate the reasons for its writing given by the author in the Prologue. Anselm first discusses the circumstances surrounding his penning the *Monologion* and then turns to those of his present work:

\[\text{coepi mecum quaerere, si forte posset inveniri unum argumentum, quod nullo alio ad se probandum quam se solo indigeret, et solum ad astruendum quia deus vere est, et quia est summum bonum nullo alio indigens, et quo omnia indigent ut sint et ut bene sint, et quaecumque de divina credimus substantia, sufficeret.}\]

I commenced to seek within myself, if perchance one might be able to find a single argument, which with no other, by itself would be able to prove how it may require only itself, and only by building up that God truly exists, and that He is the Highest Good needing no other, and which all things need in order to be and in order to be good, and whatever we believe about divine substance, it may suffice.

This long and complicated sentence contains the essence of Anselm’s propositional purpose in the *Proslogion*. He wanted to find a single argument [unum argumentum] which was able to prove by itself that: 1) God exists; 2) He is the Highest Good needing no other, 3) all things need God to be and to be good, and 4) whatever else Christians believe about the substance of God. Now to find a single argument to prove all of these propositions is not a small task, and Anselm recalls how he tried to push the goal away, even thinking it may be from Satan, but eventually he eagerly embraced the thought or cogitation (cogitationem) which he anxiously repelled.

For centuries interpreters have debated what this single argument or thought which Anselm sought was. For much of history, the single argument was considered to be the proof of God’s existence delineated in Chapter 2. Indeed, although hinted at in Augustine and Boethius, this argument was unique in philosophical and theological history, and occupies the majority of the debate that immediately springs up between Anselm and Gaunilo. However, the work of Barth popularized, and later commentators
further documented, that the single argument needed to cover the entirety of the

*Proslogion*, or the work would simply be another “chain of arguments” like the

*Monologion* which Anselm strictly denies in his Prologue.382 Today, following Barth, it

is widely recognized that the *unum argumentum* to which Anselm refers is the singular

phrase *quo nihil maius cogitari possit* [that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought].

Nelis argues that this phrase serves as an example of a “maximal proposition” derived

from Boethian logic:

> Though the phrase has been variously called a definition, (Southern) an axiom (G. R. Evans), a presupposition (Gombocz), and even a conclusion (Campbell), no one to my knowledge has identified it as a Maximal Proposition – a concept invented by Boethius and articulated in both of his discussions on Topics, the *ICT* and the monograph *On the Differentiation of Topics* [*de diff top*].383

Whatever one calls it, it is important to recognize that an “argument” in Anselm’s age
did not only refer to a complete propositional proof or logical syllogism, but to the
axioms and premises which are used in such larger probative structures. It shall be

demonstrated that, in the case of the *Proslogion*, *quo nihil maius cogitari possit* is utilized
as an organizational structure that underpins every chapter’s propositional assertions.

After working through the propositional content of the entire *Proslogion*, we will return
to the heart of the argument over Chapters 2-4, as they impacted the history of philosophy
more than any other aspect of Anselm’s work.

To do a proper propositional analysis of the flow of the *Proslogion’s* didactic
content, it is most helpful to utilize the chapter titles. Although these titles may not have
been originally part of Anselm’s work, there is evidence that they were already in use
during his lifetime, and that he may have created them, or at least approved of them,

383 Nelis, 155.
himself. Therefore, it is useful to do a short dialectic analytic of the propositional content of the Proslogion facilitated by the Chapter-Titles (as translated by Jasper Hopkins).\footnote{Jasper Hopkins, \textit{A New, Interpretive Translation of St. Anselm’s Monologion and Proslogion} (Minneapolis: Banning Press, 1986).}

1. \textit{Arousal of the mind for contemplating God.}

The first chapter is an emotional appeal to God to allow himself to be known. However, there is a propositional assertion that the present lack of experience of God is due to humanity’s Fall. He “lost that for which he was created” and is now unable to experience God. Finally, the author relates his own approach stating that he does not seek to understand so that he can believe, but believes so that he can understand, and that he believes he will not understand unless he believes.

2. \textit{God truly [i.e., really] exists.}

The second chapter is dedicated to the demonstration that God exists from the phrase \textit{quod nihil maius cogitari possit}. The basic argument is that:

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] Even the fool knows “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived” exists in his understanding as a concept when he hears it.
\item[b)] Existence in reality as well as in the understanding is greater than existing only in the understanding.
\item[c)] If “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” exists only in the understanding, it is possible to think of something greater, namely “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” that exists both in the understanding and in reality.
\item[d)] It is impossible for there to something greater than “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought”, therefore “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” must exist in reality.
\end{itemize}

The basic form of the argument is \textit{reductio ad absurdum}, where the statement “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought does not exist” is shown to be illogical, it is
reduced to absurdity. The chapter concludes with the proposition: “Therefore there can be no doubt at all that something than which a greater cannot be thought exists both in the understanding and in reality.”

3. [God] cannot be thought not to exist.
The third chapter embarks on what Hartshorne and Plantinga have described as the “modal argument.” Anselm moves into the logic of possibilities, building off Aristotle’s logic, and asserts: “it is not possible to think of it as not existing.” He deduces this by referring back to his single argument *quo nihil maius cogitari possit*, declaring it is possible to think of the existence of something which you cannot think of as not existing. This is greater than something which you can think of as not existing. Therefore, it must be impossible to think that *quo nihil maius cogitari possit* does not exist.

Anselm then argues that this makes sense because otherwise if the creature could think of something better than the Creator it would judge its Creator, which is again absurd.

4. How the Fool said in his heart that which cannot be thought.
The fourth chapter deals with the apparent contradiction introduced between Chapter 2, where Anselm quotes the bible saying that “the fool has said in his heart there is no God”, and Chapter 3, where he says it is impossible to say that God does not exist. He introduces a distinction between two different ways of thinking or “saying in one’s heart”:

a) Thinking a word which signifies the thing.
b) Thinking in a way the thing itself is truly understood. This explains why it is possible to “entertain the concept that God does not exist” in one way (through the words), but not in another (true understanding). If one truly understands *quo nihil maius cogitari possit*, and not just the words, one understands that it cannot be thought not to exist.

5. *God is whatever it is better to be than not to be. Alone existing through Himself, He makes all other things from nothing.*

The fifth chapter explicitly states the principle which has been operative, and will serve as the controlling probative mechanism for the remainder of the work: since God is *quo nihil maius cogitari possit*, it follows that God is whatever it is better to be than not be. This means that God is just, true, blessed, and whatever else we know to be superlative.

6. *How God is able to perceive even though He is not something corporeal.*

The sixth chapter opens with Anselm declaring “it is better to be capable of perception, omnipotent, merciful, and impassible than not to be so” and thus opens the content for the next several chapters. This chapter asserts that it is better to perceive than not to, but the highest spirit is better than a body. Thus God must be able to perceive, but also cannot have a body. How can these two conclusions be reconciled? God can be said to perceive because “to perceive is nothing else but to know.” Even though God doesn’t have a sensual body and the related physical senses, he knows all the things the senses perceive though not through a body “like an animal.”

7. *How He is omnipotent even though He cannot do many things.*

The seventh chapter reflects that God cannot do things like “be corrupted, or lie, or make false what is true”, and tries to reconcile this with the fact it is better to be omnipotent
than not. He addresses the issue by saying these are not forms of “power” but “powerlessness.” Just as we say “he is doing something” or “he is sitting” but really sitting is non-doing. Adversity and perversity have power over a being who does these things. God is all-powerful because He “cannot do anything through powerlessness, and nothing has power over You.”

8. How He is merciful and impassible.
The eighth chapter assumes that it is better to not feel emotion than feel emotion, thus God is impassible. However, it is also better to be merciful than non-merciful. How can these be reconciled? Anselm asserts that God is compassionate from our point of view not his own. He is compassionate in the sense he saves wretches and pardons sins, but he does not experience the emotion or feeling of compassion.

9. How He who is completely and supremely just spares those who are evil. He is justly merciful to them.
The ninth chapter deals with another classic theological dilemma, that of justice and mercy. It is better to be just than unjust, and merciful than non-merciful, therefore God must be just and merciful. However, if God is just, and the wicked deserve death, how can God save the wicked in his mercy and still be just? Interestingly, this chapter invokes the “inaccessible light” where God dwells, and lingers on the fact that God’s “goodness is beyond comprehension.” The characteristic of goodness is seen to be intrinsic to both justice and mercy but exactly how is not clear. Compassion seems to proceed from justice and God is “good in this way so that you cannot be conceived to be better, and you act with such power, so that you cannot be thought to be more powerful.” God would not be just if he was “good only in punishment and not in forgiveness.”
Anselm’s final proposition is that since God does forgive, it would be wrong to say that forgiveness is somehow unjust.

10. *How He justly punishes and justly spares those who are evil.*

After dealing with the conundrum of sparing the wicked, Anselm now turns in the tenth chapter to God’s just punishment of the wicked. He states: “When you punish the wicked, this is just, because it is what they deserve; but when you pardon them, this is just, not because of their deserts, but because it assorts well with your goodness.” He returns to a distinction between doing things according to God’s nature and ours, and sees it logical that he justly punishes the wicked according to their nature and pardons some of the wicked accordance to his entirely good nature.

11. *How “all the ways of the Lord are mercy and truth,” and yet, “the Lord is just in all His ways.”*

Chapter 11 returns again to the theme of justice and mercy and declares that “the only thing that is just, is what you will; and the only thing that is unjust, is what you do not will.” Yet, Anselm admits that “reason certainly cannot comprehend why through your supreme goodness you should save some, and through your supreme justice condemn others, when both are equally evil.” With this somewhat agnostic approach to the application of justice and mercy in particular circumstances, Anselm nears the end of the section of the *Proslogion* dedicated to positively asserting attributes to God from the reality of what is better in Creation. He sums this approach and what has gone before saying: “So in fact you can perceive and you are all powerful; you are compassionate and you cannot suffer; just as you are alive, wise, good, blessed, eternal, and whatever it is better to be than not be.”

12. *God is the life by which He lives, and similarly for similar [attributes].*
The twelfth chapter is a turning point in the work, only two sentences long, and it works in conjunction with 13, 14, and the similarly short Chapter 15, to declare God as he is in Himself, not derived from observations of nature. God is what he is in himself, not derived from anything else. Anselm states the proposition succinctly: “You are the very life by which you live, the knowledge by which you know, the goodness by which you are good, and so forth.” This is the heart of a participatory ontology where God is the very attributes we describe him by, rather than having them added to his being from another source.

13. How He alone is unlimited and eternal, although other spirits are [also] unlimited and eternal.
The thirteenth chapter is the final chapter of the first half of the work, and states positively that God is not limited by time and space, because they are constraints and it is greater to be without such limits. God is thus eternal and omnipresent. Anselm asks an interesting question about created spirits which he states are both “limited and unlimited”, limited in comparison to God, but unlimited in comparison to bodies. Thus ends the via positiva of the first half of the work, which utilized aspects of the created world to come to knowledge of God.

14. How and why God is both seen and not seen by those who seek Him.
The beginning of the second half of the Proslogion returns to the questions of Chapter 1, and whether Anselm has found what he is seeking. He states positively what he has found: “I was seeking God, and I have found that He is above all things, and that than which nothing greater can be thought. I have found Him to be life and light, wisdom and goodness, eternal blessedness and the bliss of eternity, existing everywhere and at all times.” He has learned and seen many new things concerning God. But he declares a
new problem – he has not experienced God. He has both seen God, and not seen God. He desires to know more, what God is beyond what he has seen already. He states that his eyes are darkened by his own sin and smallness, as well as by God’s dazzling glory. He declares how supremely great the light of truth is that lightens the reasoning mind. The chapter ends with the apophatic declaration “It is indeed more than a creature can understand!”

15. He is greater than can be thought.
The fifteenth chapter has rightly garnered a very large body of investigation and speculation. It is a brief two sentences, but a decisive turning point in the Proslogion. Anselm has now seemingly exhausted his positive search and declares that God is not only quo nihil maius cogitari possit [that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought] but he is in fact quiddam maius quam cogitari possit [that-which-is-greater-than-possible-to-think]. Here we see that Anselm isn’t negating all that has preceded, but he is expanding the concept of God even further. God isn’t just the upper limits of what it is possible for humans to cogitate, he is beyond human cogitation. Again he utilizes the quo nihil maius cogitari possit, this time to limit itself, saying that it is possible to think of something greater than can be thought, and thus the formula gives birth to its own supersession.

16. This is the inaccessible light in which He dwells.
The sixteenth chapter is a further exploration of God’s unknowability, utilizing the Scriptural descriptor of “inaccessible light” and declaring the author’s inability to penetrate the omnipresence of God. The propositional content declares God is greater than human understanding, and yet he is described positively as “Light, entire and
inaccessible!” as well as “Truth, whole and blessed.” The final conclusion of the chapter is that “You are within me and around me, and I have no experience of you.”

17. Harmony, fragrance, succulence, softness, and beauty are present in God in their own ineffable manner.
The seventeenth chapter continues the theme of inaccessibility, declaring God contains the object of the human senses in his own “ineffable manner.” The issue is that the author cannot experience the beauty, harmony, fragrance, savour, and softness of God, which are things that are greater to be than not to be. He concludes that God still contains these positive attributes, but that his own sin has blocked his soul’s capacity to sense them. Anselm sees God as possessing these traits in an unknowable manner, but yet giving them to created beings in a way they can feel through their senses.

18. There are no parts in God or in the eternity which He is.
In the eighteenth chapter, Anselm argues that God cannot be divided. He declares that God is life, wisdom, truth, goodness, blessedness, eternity and all true good, but the human mind cannot properly grasp Him “in a single glance.” He wonders if these attributes are parts of God, but concludes negatively saying that God is One, uniting all of these in himself. It is the human mind that divides things into Categories to try and understand, but that cannot be truly done since God is one. This is of course impossible for the human mind to comprehend, but it is the unknowable reality of the Divinity.

19. He is not in place or in time; but all things are in Him.
The nineteenth chapter continues the via negativa, learning how God is not like created reality, and what we cannot comprehend. God is not in time, his eternity is always a whole. God’s existence is simple, neither yesterday, tomorrow, today, but “right outside time.” God is not in time or place, but all is in him.
20. He is before and beyond all things— even eternal things.
The twentieth chapter posits God’s supremacy as filling and enfolding all things, being before and, mainly, beyond all things. He explicitly delineates ways in which God is beyond all things including, their dependence upon his existence for their being while his existence continues whether or not they exist, that they can be thought to have an end while God cannot, and that even eternal things do not have their past or future existence present to them while all of God’s eternity is present to him. He concludes, “Thus you are always beyond them, for that which they have not reached is where you always are, or rather it is always present to you.”

21. Whether this [eternity] is one aeon or more than one.
The twenty-first chapter returns to a consideration of God’s eternity, this time proposing that God’s eternity is both “the age of the age” because of its undivided unity, and “ages of ages” because of its unlimited immensity. It is also asserted that God fills all space but has no dimension of space, lacking a middle, half, or any part as a result.

22. He alone is what He is and who He is.
In the twenty-second chapter Anselm declares that God is alone who he is, timeless, without beginning, and independent of all other things, unable to be thought of as not existing. He describes God’s existence as true and simple.

Anselm then concludes the section composed of Chapters 16-22 with a summary: “And you are life and light, wisdom and blessedness, eternity and many other such good things, indeed you yourself are nothing other than the one and highest good, entirely sufficient in yourself, needing nothing, but he whom all things need for their being and well being.”
23. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equally this [supreme] good. It is the one necessary [Being], which is every good, complete good, and the only good.

The twenty-third chapter begins a three-chapter section dealing with the Triune nature of the Divine Existence. Anselm begins by declaring God the Father is this good, and His Word is His Son. God’s Word is Himself, neither greater nor lesser than Himself, and the Holy Spirit is the love that proceeds from the Father and Son. Anselm deduces: “So Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is wholly as Trinity what each is in Himself; for each is none other than the highest single unity and the highest unity of persons, which can neither be multiplied nor made other.” The final sentence states that “this is that one thing necessary”, thus giving to the Trinity the status of necessary existence.

24. A conjecture about what kind of good this is and about how great it is.

The twenty-third chapter discusses how much good the good of God must be compared to that of creation. The goodness, life, delight, joy, salvation, wisdom, and delight of the Creator must be so much greater than that found amongst creatures. He specifically speaks of how much more joyful the salvation that saves all things must be, how lovable the wisdom that knows all things and made all things out of nothing must be, and how much better and deeper the delight must be of the one who made all delights. This chapter thus reiterates themes of joy, love, and knowledge [wisdom] that were introduced in the first chapter, and compares how much greater they are in God, that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived.

25. The kinds and the quantity of goods for those who enjoy this [Good].

The twenty-fifth chapter speaks again about the nature of Divine Existence, declaring that humanity should love the one good that contains all goods. It proposes that God is the source of all joy that can be experienced. If one desires that one good, one will find all
the great things one could love in life including beauty, or speed, or strength and freedom of the body, or long and healthy life, or abundance, or drink, or melody, or pure pleasure, or wisdom, or friendship, or unity, or power, or honour and riches, or true security. Because there is so great a good, the joy that comes must be rich and great if one had all these things. Anselm then points out that if others, whom one loves, also had these things, than joy would double in rejoicing over their joy. Even if they loved God with their whole, heart, soul, and mind they would still be overflowed by such joy.

26. Whether this is the full joy which the Lord promises.
The final chapter of the Proslogion declares that the author has found a joy that is more than full, beyond measure. That joy is God himself who cannot fully enter into a person, but all persons can enter fully into that joy. Despite his superlative attempt to describe the joy, still neither eye has seen nor ear has heard nor heart fully experienced how great it will be in the future. He closes with a request to more fully know and love and rejoice in God. Thus he declares that despite his experience of incredible joy, he does not yet have full knowledge, or love, or the joy of God, but wishes to grow in it until he enters the joy of God. He ends the work with the proposition that God is one and triune, blessed forever.

The forgoing propositional analysis of the entirety of the Proslogion was necessary in order to show that it has a full discursive content subject to philosophical critique, to explore said content, and to demonstrate the contention that the unum argumentum was the controlling mechanism for all such content. It is from the fact that God is that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-conceived that each and every proposition could ultimately be derived. It serves as a unifying logical inference that undergirds the
entire philosophic enterprise. Of course, to critique and debate each and every proposition is beyond the scope of this project; Anselm’s assertion of God’s timelessness and impassibility alone are currently subjects of seeming inexhaustible debate in the philosophical-theological academy. However, since the arguments of Chapters 2-4 have stood out as uniquely important in the history of both philosophy and theology, it is important to have a further discussion about how they function, and what exactly Anselm considered them to have accomplished.

The arguments of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have received more detailed commentary than any other single section of Anselm’s oeuvre. Their content has become known as “the ontological argument” and become one of the most debated arguments concerning God’s existence. Any basic training in philosophy today inevitably involves either reading Anselm’s argument or one of the many derivative iterations that it inspired over the past millennia. To clarify the possible range of interpretation the following heuristic is helpful:

a) The arguments are a valid and satisfactory philosophical proof of God’s existence (Bonaventure, Descartes, Leibniz, Hegel, Gödel, Hartshorne, Malcolm, Plantinga, Nash, Craig, Rogers)

b) The arguments attempt to prove God’s existence philosophically but fail (Gaunilo, Aquinas, Hume, Kant, Frege, Russell, King, Nelis, Broad)

c) The arguments are valid only within a theological devotional framework that presupposes belief though they may perhaps cause the non-believer to question their own perspective (Barth, Stoltz, Campbell)

Of course, there are various nuances for these three major categories of response to Anselm’s work. For example, Descartes will accept and alter the argument utilizing a concept of “perfection”, whilst Plantinga does not accept the argument of Chapter 2, but embraces the “modal argument” of Chapter 3. On the other hand, Aquinas rejected the
argument as circular reasoning, David Hume critiqued its lack of empirical basis, while Kant will reject the argument on the famous assertion that “existence is not a predicate”, attacking Anselm’s assumption that it is greater to exist in reality as well as in thought, than to exist only in thought.

However, these two approaches share the common assumption that Anselm actually intended his argument to convince the skeptic that God actually did exist. It is the third interpretive track that objects to this assertion, stating that Anselm’s argument only works within a faith framework, giving the Christian a better understanding of what they already believe. This approach often emphasizes the apophatic dimension of the work, and is most influentially put forth by Karl Barth in his work whose title is taken directly from a phrase contained within the Proslogion and actually Anselm’s original title, Fides Quaerens Intellectum. 385

The assertion that Anselm’s argument indeed speaks to the atheist is highly contested in the contemporary setting, especially in light of Barth’s interpretation of Anselm. Barth argues that Anselm himself had no conception of the modern “atheist,” in that he never encountered a person who did not believe in God. It could be suggested that the “fool” to whom Anselm is referring is not an atheist, but resembles Augustine’s christiani carnales, Christians who treat lower things as if they were higher things. In this case, even the monks Anselm expected to read his meditation may or may not be “fools,” as those who act in this manner are implicitly denying the Creator by treating a material object as they should only the divine. Thus, in this perspective, fools may deny God’s existence implicitly by their actions although they would never do so explicitly. Anselm, in this perspective, never intended a deductive proof of God’s existence that

would convince someone outside the faith. As such, the *Proslogion* would not speak to the modern atheist. This interpretation has gained in popularity due to the rise of postmodernism.

It is the undaunted exultation of the place of reason in religious matters, especially its ability to argue logically against atheism, that the current academic climate has fulminated against as specious casuistry. To intransigently laud logic’s ability to conjure irrefragable arguments for God’s existence has become interdicted as the ultimate arrogance of an onto-theology obsessed with the quashing of all difference of opinion. It is in this context that many theologians have aligned themselves to the Barthian reading of Anselm’s most famous work, the *Proslogion*. According to the neo-orthodox father, Karl Barth, within the *Proslogion* we discover a use of reason that is fundamentally opposed to the one sketched above. The key concept for Barth is Anselm’s original title for the work, “*Faith in Quest of Understanding*”. He disagrees with the common attempt to read Anselm’s “ontological argument” as an aprioristic deduction that proves the existence of God to the nonbeliever by beginning with an idea of God and arguing to divine existence. Instead, Barth stresses Anselm’s contention that he writes the *Proslogion* “from the point of view of one trying to raise his mind to contemplate God and seeking to understand what he believes.”

This emphasis of faith over reason finds its apogee at the end of the first chapter: “For I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that ‘unless I believe, I shall not understand [Isa. 7:9] (*Proslogion*, Preface).’” Taking his cue from this passage, Barth argues that Anselm in no way attempts a form of apologetics; he is not interested in proving the existence of God to the atheist. His reasoning begins from the

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386 *Proslogion*, Preface, 83.
framework of faith, and simply attempts to show the reasonableness of the existence of God to those who are already within the theistic fold. Indeed, Anselm does believe he can use logic to convince those within Christianity of his particular position, as evidenced by his argument that the Greeks should be persuaded through logic toward the Catholic position on the filoque.  

Yet, Barth’s characterization of the non-apologetic tone of Anselm’s work is seriously hampered by the previously discussed argument in the Monologion, which explicitly says that “someone […] who does not believe” can be convinced of the truth of God “by reason alone.” Barth’s argument that Anselm never states that reason can be utilized to argue with and convert the unbeliever is simply unfounded. “The fool says in his heart there is no God.” It is this revelation, the fool as a biblical res or thing, with which Anselm attempts to come to grips. The fool could indeed be a monk who shows by his actions that he lacks true faith in God. Yet, to say that Anselm could not imagine an atheist, a person who denies God’s existence, because they were uncommon, perhaps non-existent, is to underestimate his intellectual acumen. Surely Anselm’s imagination is keen enough to contemplate the possibility of a human denying the very existence of God. He explicitly states he wants a single argument for God’s existence based on reason, and has elsewhere argued the ability of reason to convince unbelievers of the truth of that which they did not believe.

Nonetheless, similar approaches have been recently embraced since the onset of postmodernism, in an attempt to rescue Anselm from the challenge of logical certitude. These are usually more nuanced arguments, which state that the Proslogion marked a

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387 On The Procession of the Holy Spirit, 1. Anselm is confident the Greeks “can be led by reason from what they unambiguously profess, to what they do not accept.”
pivotal turn away from the natural theology of the *Monologion* outlined above.\textsuperscript{388} However, such hopes to rehabilitate Anselm can simply not be justified when one takes into account the Anselmian corpus as a whole. First, the language of the *Proslogion* itself contests this dilution of Anselm’s logic, with language that includes his prefatory comments about “one single argument that for its proof required no other save itself, and that by itself would suffice to prove that God really exists […] and also to prove whatever we believe about the Divine Being (*Proslogion*, Preface).” Furthermore, the arguments of Chapters 2 and 3 directly concern themselves with the Fool, who has said in his heart there is no God. The force of the logic seems to be that the Fool, if he truly understands what is meant by “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought,” must come to the conclusion that God exists. To be sure, Anselm believes that, after truly coming to grips with his argument, “if I did not want to believe that You existed, I should nevertheless be unable not to understand it (*Proslogion*, 4).” The Fool’s position has been reduced to one of the heart, an unwillingness to believe, after the argument has proven logically that God must exist.

Most importantly, one must take into consideration that Anselm’s first critic, Gaunilo, believed the argument attempted to prove the existence of God to the fool. This initial reaction is not corrected by Anselm, in fact, the monk of Bec actually states more strongly that he believes his argument achieves just this goal. Anselm explains what he was doing in the *Proslogion* in his reply to Gaunilo’s objections on behalf of the fool, saying, “It was therefore not wholly without reason that, to prove against the Fool that God exists, I proposed ‘that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought’ (*Reply to Gaunilo*,

\textsuperscript{388} Richard Campbell, *From Belief to Understanding*, (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974).
The language clearly indicates a probative and apologetic function. He sums up his position quite forcefully at the end of the same reply:

I think now that I have shown that I have proved in the above tract, not by a weak argumentation but by a sufficiently necessary one, that something-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought exists in reality itself, and that this proof has not been weakened by the force of any objection. For the import of this proof is in itself of such force that what is spoken of is proved (as a necessary consequence of the fact that it is understood or thought of) both to exist in actual reality and to be itself whatever must be believed about the Divine Being (Reply to Gaunilo, 10) [italics mine].

It is here in the reply to a Christian monk that Anselm makes clear that he indeed does think his unum argumentum capable of proving God to exist in reality. He does not take Gaunilo to task for misreading his intention, as the postmodern reading would have it, but instead meets his critic on his own ground, addressing each of his contestations in turn. That no objection can logically stand up to his argument is forcibly asserted against the Fool, and the Proslogion’s probative functionality maintained.

There is not enough space here either to adequately summarize and critique the numerous philosophical interactions with the “ontological argument”, or to assess properly whether or not the argument is indeed valid and conclusive. That task has been accomplished by great philosophers and commentators, and the work still continues. It is important to note however, that the Proslogion has had a shaping influence on the entirety of western philosophy, and can even claim a unique role in shaping both sides of the debate in the current rivalry between the analytic and the postmodern schools of contemporary philosophy. As such, our investigation can conclude that Anselm is a
philosopher of great distinction, indeed still inducing intelligent debate and inspiring some of the most important minds in the history of philosophy through his *Proslogion*.

### 4.3 *Proslogion* Liturgics

The poetic and dialectic analytics of the *Proslogion* have revealed a work both of surprising artistic and philosophic merit. As a document it stands as one of the greatest examples of both literary quality and logical rigour, and in doing so, impels the question: How do the poetic and dialectic elements relate? How does prayer and argument combine? Do the philosophy of the single argument and the poetry of divine desiring relate in any way? The answer of course is that there is indeed an important relationship between poetry and philosophy in the work, and more than perhaps any other author, Anselm has integrated the affective and deductive categories of language, conflating the highest heights of emotion and devotional poetic technique with the most stringent of argument and seasoned reason.

Of course, as we have discovered, Anselm had plenty of examples of the confluence of poetry and philosophy in the work of his major influences, specifically the theological poetry of Augustine and the Psalms, and the more formal *prosimetra* of Martianus Capella and Boethius. However, whereas both the *Consolation* and *De Nuptiis* very obviously divide the poetic and didactic elements of their work based upon the distinction of metric verse and non-metric prose, Anselm’s work does not contain such simplistic structural markers. Anselm uses rhyme and alliteration and repetition which make distinguishing the so-called “poetic” passages from the “philosophic” that much more difficult. In fact, it can be argued that these stylistic devices are utilized throughout the entirety of the *Proslogion*. As remarked earlier, those passages distinguished as
poetry due to their rendering into modern poetic lines, are interestingly not uniformly attested to in modern scholarship, making it necessary to re-examine the difference between the so-called poetic parts and the argument parts. It is actually more difficult to separate than current scholarship indicates since those who have helped re-emphasize the poetry have been somewhat arbitrary in their selection of what sections are “poetic.” Ward and Frommann-Holzboog are interesting in having selected different chapters for poetic rendering. For example, why is only part of Chapter 26 poetic in the Frommann-Holzboog text? Why does Fromman-Holzboog not see the entirety of Chapters 14, 16, and 26 in poetic lines as Ward does, yet renders the whole of Chapter 17, and the second half of Chapter 24, and the second half of Chapter 25 into poetry when Ward does not? Most curious is Chapter 18 where Frommann-Holzboog makes the first half of the chapter into poetic lines and the second half remains in standard paragraph form, whilst Ward will make the second half poetic but the initial half prosaic. The question thus becomes what are the criteria for rendering a section of the Proslogion into poetic lines or not? It becomes obvious that in the case of Chapter 18 it seems justifiable to see the whole of the Latin text as a poetic construction:

Et iterum ecce turbatio,
ecce iterum obuiat maeror et luctus
quarenti gaudio et laetitiam!
Sperabat iam anima mea satietatem,
et ecce iterum obruitur egestate!
Affectabam iam comedere,
et ecce magis esurire!
Conabar assurgere ad lucem dei,
et recidi in tenebras meas.
Immo non modo cecidi in eas
sed sentio me inuolutum in eis.
Ante cecidi, quam conciperet “me mater mea”.
Certe in illis “conceptus sum”,
et cum earum obuolutione natus sum.
Olim certe in illo omnes cecidimus,  
“in quo omnes” peccauimus.
In illo omnes perdidimus,  
qui facile tenebat et male sibi et nobis perdidit,  
quod cum uolumus quaerere nescimus,  
cum quaerimus non inuenimus,  
cum inuenimus non est quod quaerimus.
Adiuua me tu “propter bonitatem tuam, domine”.  
“Quaesitui uultum tuum, uultum tuum, domine, requiem;  
ne auertas faciem tuam a me”.
Releua me de me ad te.
Munda, sane, acue,  
“illumine” oculum mentis meae,  
ut intueatur te.
Recolligat uires sues anima mea,  
et totu intellectu iterum intendat in te, domine.

Quid es, domine, quid es,  
quid te intelliget cor meum?
Certe uita es, sapientia es, ueritas es,  
bonitas es, beatitudo es, aeternitas es, et omne uerum bonum es.
Multa sunt haec,  
non potest angustus intellectus meus tot uno simul intuitu uidere,  
ut omnibus simul delectetur.
Quomodo ergo, domine, es omnia haec?
An sunt partes tui, aut potius  
unumquodque horum est totum quod es?
Nam quidquid partibus est iunctum,  
non est omnino unum sed quodam modo plura et diuersum a seipso,  
et uel uctu uel intellectu dissolu potest;  
quae aliena sunt a te quo nihil melius cogitari potest.

Nullae igitur partes sunt in te, domine,  
nec es plura sed sic es unum quiddam et idem tibi ipsi,  
ut in nullo tibi ipsi sis dissimilis;  
immo tu es ipsa unites, nullo intellectu diuisibilis.
Ergo uita et sapientia et reliqua non sunt partes tui sed omnia sunt unum,  
et unumquodque horum est totum quod es,  
et quod reliqua omnia.
Quoniam ergo nec tu haloes partes nec tua aeternitas quae tu es:  
nusquam et numquam est pars tua aut aeternitatis tuae sed ubique totus es,  
et aeternitas tua tota est semper.

Rendering the Latin text of Chapter 18 into poetic lines as above, makes it obvious just  
how poetic the entire structure actually is. It might be argued that it is just the way Latin
works, but at least two scholars have seen the poetic elements, yet also missed the other
half of the chapter. What is most important to note, is how different this prosa is from
that of Anselm’s logical tractates, including the meditation of the Monologion.
Furthermore, these chapters are much different compared to even he Prologue of the
Proalogion itself.

The fact that such an obviously poetic structure was only half-recognized by two
important scholars requires a re-evaluation of how the poetic and prosaic elements of the
Proalogion have been identified. Is the work a series of alternating poetry and prose like
the more famous prosimeta? If so, does one take precedence? Ward will argue that the
poetic prayers are a “framework” for the Proalogion. Such a concession is similar to
some assessments of the Consolation that see the poetic portions as simply restatements
of the philosophy for easier consumption, or as an emotional compliment. This is the
view of G. R. Evans, who sees the role of poetry in the Proalogion as simply serving as
introduction and conclusion, and a frame for argument. She states:

In the Proalogion alone prayer and argument are brought together in a single
work, but even here there is no fusion of the two modes of knowing God; Anselm
merely mingles the two, and it would seem from the tone of his preface that the
seminal idea was something he regarded as belonging to the field of argument.
That is certainly how he went on to develop it in Chapters 2-4.

In other words, the prayer poetry of the Proalogion is simply superfluous, or serves
merely to emotionally bolster the real work of the philosophy.

Yet, when one begins to analyze the whole text of the Proalogion one begins to
notice that something different is at play. One discovers that even in the so-called
“argument” portion of the famous Chapters 2-4 mentioned by Evans, there is a poetic

390 Ward, 76.
434-435.
dimension. In fact there is a tremendous use of rhyme, alliteration, and especially balance of phrase and parallelism throughout. Let us render Chapter 2, perhaps the most complicated and probative of the entire main text, into poetic lines:

\[
\text{Ergo, domine, qui das fidei intellectum,} \\
\text{da mihi, ut quantum scis expedire intelligam,} \\
\text{quia es sicut credimus, et hoc es quod credimus.} \\
\text{Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid} \\
\text{quo nihil maius cogitari possit.} \\
\text{An ergo non est aliqua talis natura,} \\
\text{quia “dixit insipiens in corde quo:} \\
\text{non est deus”?} \\
\text{Sed certe ipse idem insipiens,} \\
\text{cum audit hoc ipsum quod dico:} \\
\text{‘aliquid quo maius nihil cogitari potest’,} \\
\text{intelligit quod audit;} \\
\text{et quod intelligit in intellectu eius est,} \\
\text{etiam si non intelligat illud esse.} \\
\text{Aliud enim est rem esse in intellectu,} \\
\text{aliud intelligere rem esse.} \\
\text{Nam cum pictor praecogitat quae facturus est,} \\
\text{habet quidem in intellectu} \\
\text{sed nondum intelligit esse quod nondum fecit.} \\
\text{Cum uero iam pinxit,} \\
\text{et habet in intellectu et intelligit esse quod iam fecit.} \\
\text{Conuincitur ergo etiam insipiens esse uel in intellectu} \\
\text{aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest,} \\
\text{quia hoc cum audit intelligit,} \\
\text{et quidquid intelligitur in intellectu est.} \\
\text{Et certe id quo maius cogitari nequit,} \\
\text{non potest esse in solo intellectu.} \\
\text{Si enim vel in solo intellectu est,} \\
\text{potest cogitari esse et in re, quod maius est.} \\
\text{Si ergo id quo maius cogitari non potest,} \\
\text{est in solo intellectu:} \\
\text{id ipsum quo maius cogitari non potest,} \\
\text{est quo maius cogitari potest.} \\
\text{Sed certe hoc esse non potest.} \\
\text{Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non valet,} \\
\text{et in intellectu et in re.}
\]

One notices immediately that rhyme is still present although much less frequent than in Chapter 1. However, there is a constant repetition of key words and phrases (e.g., *in solo*
intellectu, quo maius cogitari potest), and a constant balancing of lines. Almost every single line borrows vocabulary and structure both from the preceding and antecedent line. The result is a tight-knit configuration that utilizes a form of dialectic parallelism, which must be considered its own type of poetic structure. Indeed, if one is able to put the parallelism of the Psalms into poetic lines as most modern translations do, one can easily argue that even this most dialectic of philosophic logic is reasonably rendered likewise. The major difference in poetic technique between Chapter 2 and the Orationes and Chapter 1 is that the latter utilize more multi-syllabic rhyme, metaphoric language, and apostrophe whilst this poetic argument favours deliberate regular repetition. Orally, however, the meticulous repetition of Chapter 2 creates a sonic pattern of concord that is very similar to the effect of the intricate rhyme patterns of Anselm’s Prayers and Meditations.

Chapter 3 is interesting as it contains both the more abstract reflection of Chapter 2 present in the first section, and the direct apostrophic address to God in the second half:

Quod utique sic vere est,
ut nec cogitari possit non esse.
Nam potest cogitari esse aliquid,
quod non possit cogitari non esse;
quod maius est quam quod non esse cogitari potest.
Quare si id quo maius nequit cogitari,
potest cogitari non esse:
id ipsum quo maius cogitari nequit,
non est id quo maius cogitari nequit;
quod convenire non potest.
Sic ergo vere est aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest,
ut nec cogitari possit non esse.

Et hoc es tu, domine deus noster.
Sic ergo vere es, domine deus meus,
ut nec cogitari possis non esse.
Et merito.
Si enim aliqua mens posset cogitare aliquid melius te, 
ascenderet creatura super creatorem, 
et iudicaret de creatore; quod valde est absurdum.
Et quidem quidquid est alius praeter te solum, 
potest cogitari non esse.
Solus igitur verissimè omnium, 
et ideo maxime omnium habes esse: 
quia quidquid alius est non sic vere, 
et idcirco minus habet esse.
Cur itaque “dixit insipiens in corde quo: non est deus”, 
cum tam in promptu sit rationali menti te maxime omnium esse?
Cur, nisi quia stultus et insipiens?

The famous “modal argument” is again seen to have a poetic structure of precise 
repetition of phrases in the initial half of Chapter 3. The second half is an interesting mix 
of direct address to God and deliberate rhyme (e.g., ergol/merito, ascenderet/iudicaret, 
solus/minus, ideol/idcirco, verissime omnium/maxime omnium). In one chapter we have 
the two poetic styles blended, yet scholarship has neglected this chapter’s obvious poetic 
dimension.

In order to show this is not a mere fluke, let us also present a poetic rendition of 
Chapter 4:

Verum quomodo dixit in corde quod cogitare non potuit; 
aut quomodo cogitare non potuit quod dixit in corde, 
cum idem sit dicere in corde et cogitare?
Quod si uere, immo quia uere et cogitauit quia dixit in corde, 
et non dixit in corde quia cogitare non potuit: 
non uno tantum modo dicitur aliquid in corde uel cogitatur.

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.
Nullus quippe intelligens id quod deus est, 
Potest cogitare quia deus non est, 
licet haec verba dicat in corde, 
aut sine ulla aut cum aliqua extranea significatione.
Deus enim est id quo maius cogitari non potest. 
Quod qui bene intelligit.
Again, a deeply dialectic chapter is also demonstrably poetic. In the first stanza it is remarkable that both corde and cogitari, heart and thinking, appear in every single line. Both the emotional and rational dimensions of humanity are being discussed. These key words continue into the second paragraph/stanza where the rational discussion of two types of understanding is presented. The final section is a return to the direction of direct address of God, thanking the Lord with repetition (gratias tibi) and both simple and multiple rhymes (bone domine/donante/illuminate, te esse nolim credere/non possim non intelligere). At the same time, this poetic prayer also serves a philosophic role by summarizing the content of Chapters 2-4 and declaring the completion of at least a level of the illumination sought in Chapter 1.

The above analysis demonstrates that even the most important philosophical argumentation in the Proslogion is properly judged poetic. This is completely rational when one realizes that in many ways these three key chapters are a philosophical reflection upon the poetry of Psalms 14(13) and 53(52) where “the fool says in his heart there is no God.” The phrases and concepts of this poetic line are repeated in each chapter, and its power hovers over the entire section. If the poetry of the Psalms is considered propositional, it is no wonder Anselm would consider it quite natural to render the propositions of his philosophic argument into poetic parallelism.
The poetic parallelism of the Proslogion is not just possible for the poetic sections already identified, nor simply Chapters 2-4, it is indeed possible to see the entire Latin text of the Proslogion laid out in poetic lines, thereby displaying the poetic aspect of the entire work. Thus, Vanderjagt seems on the right path when he argues that “Like Boethius’s *Consolatio philosophiae* earlier and Bernard Silvestris’s *Cosmographis* later, Anselm’s *Proslogion* is a fine specimen both of prosimetrics and prose poetry.”392 The comparison to Boethius and Silvestris is telling, indicating a rare scholarly admission that Anselm’s *Proslogion* should be considered amongst the *prosimetra*. Dronke conspicuously never included Anselm in his classic study of the genre, and generally wrote on Anselm as a logician and philosopher rather than a constructor of poetic literature. Again Vanderjagt goes further in stating “prosimetrics is practiced throughout the work.”393 But again, what is the different between “prosimetrics” and “prose poetry”?

It seems that Anselm’s *Proslogion* is indeed to be placed in the genre of prosimetrum despite the fact its poetic dimension has been historically overlooked or underplayed by the majority of commentaries throughout the centuries. Dronke for example is not a stranger to Anselm, but seems more interested in the *Proslogion*’s philosophic contribution, and oblivious to the poetic merit of the work. And yet, Dronke’s assertion that a characteristic of prosimetrum as a genre is not just that it contains poetry and philosophy, but that it contains an element of undermining intrinsic to the initial *satira* that utilized the form. This is most evident in the interesting turn introduced in Chapter 15:

393 Ibid., 229, n. 1.
Ergo domine, non solum *es quo maius cogitari nequit* sed *es quiddam maius quam cogitari possit.* Quoniam namque valet *cogitari esse aliquid huiusmodi:* si tu non es hoc ipsum, *potest cogitari aliquid maius te; quod fieri nequit.*

Again the parallelism is dominant with multiple repetitions of *cogitari* in the centre of the short chapter modified repeatedly by *maius, nequit, aliquid,* and *possit/potest.* The basic move in the chapter is actually a play on words, a pun. Where as up to this point the *unum argumentum* has been the phrase *quo maius nihil cogitari potest,* it is now altered to the very similar yet unique *quiddam maius quam cogitari possit.* That-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought is now revealed to be that-which-is-greater-than-can-be-thought! The difference in wording seems minimal, but the difference in meaning is enormous. The first iteration speaks of the God being at the very limits of human thought, the new formulation declares God to beyond human thought. It is possible to regard both formulas as a unique name of God, with the earlier leading logically to the latter.

Chapter 15 thus shows a poetic format of parallelism and repetition (and some minor rhymes such as *ergolquo* and *nequit/possit*), as well as a poetic play on words that delivers a turning point in the approach of the work. One could say that it subtly undermines the *via positiva* in the first half of the work and highlights the *via negativa* in the second half. Of course the middle unit of Chapters 12-15 works together to accomplish this transition, but it is this chapter that completes the transition and leads into the next major section of Chapters 16-22. Overton adds another important observation on the poetic nature of Chapter 15 with regards to the form of the
His investigation centres around the fact that this is a rare irregular semi-deponent form of the verb *facio* (to do) in Latin. He posits three possible English translations: 1) “be done”, 2) “happen”, and 3) “become.” After intensive analysis he concludes that there are three possible ways to interpret the meaning of the second sentence in Chapter 15:

1. Something greater than God cannot be **conceived** to exist (“be done”)
2. Something greater than God cannot **exist** (“happen”)
3. Something greater than God cannot **become** (“become”)

Overton explains the deficiency of even these possible translations saying, “But English translation provides no adequate means simultaneously to express these nuances of the passive, active, reflexive and intransitive implications—and all of the submeanings that we have previously noted.” For Overton, Anselm purposefully uses this form of *fieri* to leave the possibilities in play, and it actually maps the Trinity onto the various possibilities that arise of divine and human agency in the grammatical categories of passive, active, reflexive, and intransitive. His point is that Chapter 15 is purposefully ambiguous in order to allow for better meditation and discussion, and to leave the propositionality at play. He sees it as the middle chapter of a poetic theological structure spanning Chapters 4-15-26, and of central significance in the meditative purpose of the text. The chapter is certainly important, and the polysemy at play with *fieri* only strengthens the idea that the *Proslogion* displays the ironic undermining that is characteristic of the prosimetrum genre. Anselm is not as blatant with the irony, just as he does not juxtapose metrical poems with complicated and long prose sentences, yet he

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394 Overton, 101-129.
395 Ibid., 109.
396 Ibid., 128.
397 Ibid.
seems to have created a document that is heavily influenced by the prosimetrum genre, and may indeed push it further.

Before turning to this question of purpose and meditation, there remains the question of how do poetry and argumentation relate in Anselm’s prosimetrum? We have discovered in our dialectic analytic that many passages classically cited as “poetic” actually contain a philosophic propositional component, actually adding to the argument perpetuated throughout the work. For example, Chapter 1 introduces the themes of love, understanding, and joy, and declares the lack thereof and Anselm’s need seek it from God, while Chapter 26 declares that he has indeed found the joy he has sought, but that he must also still continually seek said joy, love, and knowledge in this life until he finds it in the blessed state to come. These chapters both purport philosophic propositions, and give an emotive charge through poetic techniques like apostrophe, rhyme, and alliteration. Yet, on the other hand, even the most famous passages of Chapters 2-4, renowned for their dialectic acumen, exhibit a poetic structure that is undeniable. If one were to try and argue it is only by the accident of the Latin language that poetic lines seem appropriate to their shape, one only need to try to render the bulk of the Prologue or Anselm’s Responsio to Gaunilo to realize that no indeed, even these philosophical arguments are purposefully given poetic structure.

In reality, one cannot truly delineate the poetic from the prosaic chapters in this work as one can often in a prosimetrum, but it is equally undeniable that the Proslogion is a work of philosophy as well as poetry. In fact, Anselm is exceptional in his ability to traverse both versification and verification, making it impossible to give complete identification of the Proslogion to either poetry or philosophy. It is a work of both, a
conflation of poetic and dialectic that remains unique in its attestation to both categories.

To demonstrate just how complete this confluence truly is, let us look further into

Chapter 17:

Adhuc lates, domine,
animam meam in luce et beatitudine tua,
et idcirco versatur illa adhuc in tenebris et miseria sua.
Circumspicit enim,
et non videt pulchritudinem tuam.
Auscultat,
et non audit harmoniam tuam.
Olfacit,
et non percipit odorem tuam.
Gustat,
et non cognoscit saporem tuam.
Palpat,
et non sentit lenitatem tuam.
Habes enim haec, domine deus, in te tuo ineffabili modo,
qui ea deest rebus a te creatis suo sensibili modo;
sed obriguernunt sed obstupuerunt sed obstricti sunt sensus
animae meae vetusto languore peccati.

As noted previously, this is an example of a tremendous control of language, especially when it comes to the rhyming structure. We have five complete sentences that rhyme with each other word for word! These holorhymes are each arguing for the completion of a human perfection in God but in unknowable ways. For five different senses Anselm utilizes a similar pattern, listing a verb which indicates an attempt to sense, then the resultant lack of sensing (using a new verb) a particular quality or object which each sense seeks. The structure leads to rhymes between the initial verbs with one another (ending in –at), the secondary verbs with one another (ending in –it) as well as the nouns with one another (pulchritudinem/harmoniam, odorelm/saporem) or even the secondary verb with the noun (sentit lenitatem). Additionally, each line ends with the personal pronoun tuam, evoking God personally, and taking the shape of the Psalms. The chapter
closes with a declaration that God has in his own *ineffabili modo*, what creatures have in their *sensibili modo*. The alliterative cascade of *ob* adjectives that sin has used to block the sensible qualities of God, grate against the mellifluous rhymes before and within.

This chapter is an example of the way that Anselm allows the poetic technique and the philosophic propositions to enhance one another. The rhymes allow the ears to hear the harmony which the passage claims God has, while the reader can also see the orderly beauty of the construction as it is laid out on the page. While one may not smell nor taste the quality of the writing, this speaks to the very lack of perceiving God’s mode of sensuality which the passage decries. Finally, if one cannot touch the poetry, one can metaphorically say that the poetry of lack is touching, even as the beauty of the wording touches the reader’s heart.

In Chapter 17 then, the philosophic content which attests to God’s ineffability containing harmony, smell, taste, softness, and beauty cannot evoke how or why, but the poetry allows one to feel both some of the harmony and beauty which is invoked, yet also the provoking lack of sensory experience which sin has revoked. When Anselm is talking about beauty, he isn’t just abstractly pontificating, the words themselves are demonstrating the very reality about which they are speaking. Thus, we see here an example of Anselm’s great ability to create poetic/dialectic theology.

The poetic/dialectic analytic thus far has uncovered a deep symbiosis of poetry and philosophy in the *Proslogion*. Unlike the conclusion of G. R. Evans, the poetry is not simply subservient to argument, nor is argument neglected for poetics, but they mutually enhance and advance one another. Others have likewise come to see that prayers and
arguments are more integrated than is often articulated. In analyzing the *Proslogion* Hibbs states Anselm “is an example of a thinker and writer who cannot easily be categorized exclusively as a theologian or philosopher or a poet. We find in Anselm no romantic opposition of sensation to intellect or of imagination to the rational capacities of human beings; likewise there is no gulf between thought and life.”398 In analyzing the dynamic of form and content in the *Proslogion*, Miller concludes: “The prayer form of the *Proslogion*, then, neither simply introduces and concludes the work nor simply forms a frame for its arguments; rather, it gives the work its problematic, its purpose, and decisively tells upon the argument of the work as the argument is caught up in the dynamism of the prayer towards the vision of God.”399 Sweeney also discusses the relationship between the poetic prayers and argument of Anselm observing that “Rhetoric and philosophy, prayer and argument, are, Anselm’s work shows, closer than we might think.”400 She is clear that this does not diminish the strengths that we usually see each to possess:

In Anselm this connection is especially transparent, for his aspirations for argument/philosophy and prayer are uncompromising and bring out the basic character nature of those forms: argument must perfectly and indubitably deliver the reality it promises and prayer must achieve the union of the finite human being with the infinite God.401

To be included also are the observations of Vanderjagt that the heart of the Proslogion is “performative.” It is in this active function of the work that the above insights allow us to begin to see just how the argumentative philosophy and beautiful poetry of the *Proslogion* relate to and integrate with one another.

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398 Hibbs, 64.
399 Richard Miller, “The Dynamic of Form and Content in Anselm’s *Proslogion*”, 80.
401 Ibid., 356.
Ultimately the unity of poetry and philosophy in the Proslogion is achieved through a unity of purpose. Anselm has declared he wants to see God, to find his face and gain knowledge, love, and joy in Him. All dialectic and poetic is directed towards this purpose […] towards the Word. Anselm has explicitly given the work a meditative purpose for his fellow monks, and Overton suggests that the format of 26 chapters belies an intention for extended meditation of either one chapter per week twice over the course of a year, or one chapter every two weeks during the Benedictine reading hour.\textsuperscript{402}

Likewise, the poetic parallelism of even the most argumentative sections would allow for better meditation and memorization, better realizing its transformative power.

It becomes apparent that the relationship of poetry and philosophy in the Proslogion is ultimately resolved in the liturgical purpose of the work – moving the heart, soul, and mind of the author and reader towards the vision of God by illumination. Both emotion and reason are necessarily integrated in an attempt to move the reader through stages of illumination to bring a vision of God that transforms the sinner through love and desire to know and feel His presence, and ultimately receive a divine joy. This will be demonstrated by a thorough re-examination of the text as a whole, with an eye towards the purpose and movement of the text.

Anselm’s Proslogion has had a small section of its contents picked apart continuously for centuries, while the rest of its assertions were relegated by the stigma of being logically superfluous. The amount of debate over his ingenious so-called ontological argument by philosophers is perhaps unparalleled by any other single text. Yet, the question of its original context and purpose was seldom asked, although a contextual investigation can prove illuminating. Anselm sees the function of his writing

\textsuperscript{402} Overton, 126.
as a thoroughly liturgical one, and, more specifically, as paralleling and supplementing
the role of the Eucharist in the life of the individual and community. In other words,
Anselm intends this text to be used as a tool for meditatively transforming the fallen
human flesh into the new creation instigated by the bodily resurrection of Christ. Thus,
in order to understand the Proslogion, we need first to study the setting and
circumstances of its composition, its genre, Anselm’s conception of the Eucharist, and its
relation to the structure and content of the text itself. Such a study will illuminate and
demonstrate the liturgical function that Anselm intended for his “faith searching for
understanding.”

As discussed earlier (Chapter 3), every moment of monastic life was intended to
be shaped by the liturgical and devotional occupation to which the monks had been
called. To understand the Proslogion properly, we must assess the positive role played
by the monastery in the formulation of Anselm’s theology. This treatise was the product
of the monastic quest for God, in which the members of the community dedicated
themselves to personal transformation through devotional disciplines and the liturgy of
the Church. Any serious attempt to understand the Proslogion must take into account
the Sitz im Leben of its production and acknowledge that its author probably, as head of
the monastery, found its composition to be in some manner congenial to his liturgical
outlook and to be shaped significantly by it.

In addition to such general observations on its monastic setting, the specific
penning of the Proslogion occurred under unique circumstances, according to Anselm’s

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account in the “Preface” of the treatise. He describes his quest to find a single
“argument” to enlighten his belief in God in terms very unfamiliar to the purely
speculative and rational branches of philosophy common to modern society. In
emotionally charged terms, he describes his rigorous quest, his sense of “desperation”,
and “despair”, and his “joy” and “eager welcome” when the solution to his “conflict”
presented itself (Proslogion, Preface). The composition of the Proslogion was not a
matter of intellectual curiosity but an existential sequence of events lived out in the
“heart” of its author. As discussed earlier, such an approach sees the desire for God, not
as a hindering assumption that must be avoided in order to objectively approach the
question of God’s existence, but instead, the driving force for his inquiry, productive of
the highest level of rational thought possible in human history. His ontological argument,
then, is a gift to humanity, the single argument that demonstrates the rationality of belief
in God’s existence and nature in a deductive manner, not simply the inductive method of
the Monologion, which utilizes a number of synchronized arguments. This one argument
is “that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought”, which entails necessarily the existence
of God and, by logical deduction from this premise, the nature that Christians posit to
God.

In the analysis of any text, the question of genre to which it belongs is
fundamental. In most cases, the study of a major theologian usually involves simple
identification with an obvious genre, most often that of speculative treatises,
commentaries, or devotional works. However, in regard to Anselm’s Proslogion, in the
light of the analysis above, the question of genre has led to the conclusion that the work is
an example of prosimetrum, an admixture of both poetry and prose. The first chapter is a poetic exploration of the nature of God and its relation to the human condition, a rhetorical piece obviously intended to arouse the reader’s emotions and to call them into the contemplation of God. Yet, Chapters 2–4, now commonly labeled ‘the ontological argument,’ are seen as the work of a master logician, writing in the genre of speculative philosophy, and have been the catalyst for centuries of philosophical debate, formulation, and reformulation. The confusion involved in classifying the genre of this document is easily seen when respected scholars such as Charlesworth place it in the category of speculative theology,404 while other translators, such as Benedicta Ward, include it with the prayers and meditations.405

To be certain, Anselm does seem at times to have two different modes of writing, a more discursive speculative mode evidenced in the major treatises, and an affective devotional mode found regularly in the prayers and meditations. Yet dividing the entire corpus into two distinct categories seems to be a dubious anachronism, and trying to confine the Proslogion to a single category is even more so.406 The Proslogion begins with a long poetic chapter, in which his mind begins to contemplate God in prayer, and then moves into the famous ontological argument and other theological inquiries, which in turn move Anselm back into doxological poetry. This pattern becomes a central factor in the formation of the treatise. For a theologian-poet such as Anselm, poetry and prayer bring to mind the ideas, language, and symbols of God in unique relationships and help stimulate fresh concepts to be submitted to logical critique, while sustained logical

404 Charlesworth, 34.
406 Gollnick, 64-65.
investigation of the question of God produces spontaneous poetic praise. As Anselm himself states, “I am always indignant with poor artists when I see our Lord himself painted with an ugly form, and I am afraid that I may find myself in the same position if I dare to set out such beautiful themes in rude and contemptible language (Cur Deus Homo, 1.3).” Anselm’s thought, engaging with the infinitely beautiful mystery of God intellectually, is often couched in poetic language. Even at his most speculative and discursive, Anselm wishes to retain the aesthetics of poetry, and his thoughts move him into liturgical worship.

Yet, von Balthasar rightly points out that Anselm rejects those presentations that he finds “pleasing but devoid of thought, which thinks it sufficient to compare image with image and set up ‘fitting parallels’ - comparing the disobedient woman Eve with the obedient woman Mary, the tree of paradise with the tree of the cross - in order to fashion there a wonderful beauty.” Aesthetic reason needs to be “established on the firmness of truth, as on a solid foundation, which, with the help of God, we have to some extent perceived (Cur Deus Homo, 2.8).”

Applying Anselm’s principles, there seems to be some credence to Lawrence Warner’s view that it seems most probable “Anselm would have been horrified at Langland’s fusion of his theory [of the atonement] with the ‘Abuse-of-Power’ one” in the poetic epic Piers Plowman. That piece of early English literature continually uses

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408 Von Balthasar, 223.
the earlier mentioned “fitting parallels” and melds together what Anselm explicitly considered two logically contradictory theses. Anselm could not accept the use of what he found to be faulty thought, even if it was aesthetically pleasing. Although poetry and philosophy combine in the Proslogion, he will not allow for either sloppy thinking or ugly, heartless logic - worship of and thinking about God belong inseparably together, and thus, we see already in this treatise that the philosophical dimension is tied explicitly to the liturgical. The modern perspective tends to view ‘liturgy’ as a purely practical or emotional phenomenon, but Anselm’s use of liturgical idiom and forms point towards a fusion of theory and practice – a truly doxological logic.

The original title of the Proslogion, “Faith in Search of Understanding”, gives us a valuable clue that Anselm did not only intend to prove the existence of God when drafting the Proslogion. Although, I have argued, against the grain of postmodern thought, that he would see his argument as having apologetic power to an unbeliever, Anselm himself is indeed working from a situation of faith in an attempt to better understand that faith. The purpose of the Proslogion as a whole, then, is not simply philosophic speculation. It will be argued that there is instead, an alternative liturgical purpose behind the composition of the document, that of redeeming the fallen mind. To this purpose both poetry and deductive logic are utilized in a confluence that is present in every line of the work.

It is the quotation from Psalm 14:1 in Chapter 2, “the fool has said in his heart, there is no God”, which spells out exactly what type of understanding Anselm’s faith was seeking. The key to determining the purpose of this work is to determine whom, in

411 Ibid., 186, 191.
Anselm’s eyes, the fool represents. A careful study of the text reveals that the fool is in fact the person who still lives according to the corrupted human flesh after the Fall, the person who fails to see God although he is everywhere. Once again, Anselm is concerned with the “heart,” for this time, it is in a struggle to avoid becoming like the fool that he writes his _Proslogion_. He worries because he too does not sense the presence of God:

> Everywhere you are entirely present,  
> and I cannot see you.  
> in you I move and have my being,  
> and I cannot come to you.  
> You are within me and around me,  
> and I have no experience of you (_Proslogion_, 16).\(^{412}\)

If Anselm is to avoid the plight of the fool, he needs to explain to himself, and the reader, how it is that we seem not to experience God if he exists and, furthermore, to show what we can know about God from our veiled experience of God. Feeling the weight of these questions, Anselm’s response in the middle of the work is to bring his questions to God:

> […] I see nothing beyond what I have seen,  
> except darkness.  
> Why is this, Lord?  
> Are my eyes darkened by my weakness,  
> or dazzled by your glory?  
> The truth is, I am _darkened by myself_  
> and also dazzled by you.  
> I am clouded by my own _smallness_  
> and overwhelmed by your immensity;  
> I am _restricted by my own narrowness_  
> and mastered by your wideness (_Proslogion_, 14).\(^{413}\)

Anselm realizes that in our finite state there is no possible way that humans will be able to understand God entirely; God is often not experienced because he is so

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\(^{412}\) The quotes from the _Proslogion_ in the remainder of this chapter are taken from the translation by Ward, 258.

\(^{413}\) The italics in the remaining quotes from Ward’s translation of the _Proslogion_ are mine, to give emphasis to the doxological language used throughout.
infinitely other that we do not even comprehend his presence. Yet Anselm does not see
this as the central problem, or the source for the fool’s folly, for he envisions a day when
God will be experienced more fully, while the same constraints of finitude will ensure
that God is still always far beyond conception. This apophatic confession of human
limitation is in fact a typical technique of liturgical worship. Thus, the problem of our
finite being, Anselm insists, is compounded, and in fact ultimately superseded, by the
observation that we are stained by the existence of sin. Anselm begins the Proslogion
decrying the plight of the fallen nature:

I was created to see you,
and I have not yet accomplished that for which I was made.
How wretched is the fate of man
when he has lost that for which he was created.
How hard and cruel was the Fall.
What has man lost, and what has he found?
What has he left, and what is left to him?
He has lost blessedness for which he was made
and he has found wretchedness for which he was not made (Proslogion, 1).”

Anselm makes it explicitly clear that the reason why he himself and the fool seemingly
fail to see or experience God is a direct result of the Fall of Adam.414 Humanity was
created to experience and see God, yet because of sin, God no longer appears
immediately present to us. The reason why the fool rejects God’s existence is that human
reason is finite and fallen, while the person of faith must strive to have his or her
understanding of God clarified. As von Balthasar explains,

So faith’s starting-point, when taken seriously, brings reason to this realization:
that it is not only - in the experiencing of reality - overwhelmed by God’s being
ever greater, but beyond that it perceives in the personal encounter how out of
tune with all-purity and all-love is man, subject as he is to original sin.415

414 Cf. Proslogion, 18.
415 Von Balthasar, 218.
Anselm’s purpose in composing the *Proslogion* can best be understood in the light of the fundamental problem of human existence - the fact that our natural state has been that of the fool ever since the Fall. Anselm wishes to aid the reader’s fallen mind to contemplate God’s existence, nature, and action, and thereby help to transform and renew said fallen mind. Three times in his prayers, Anselm cries out to God referring to the initial creative act of God in parallel to an act of “re-creation (*Proslogion*, 1 and 14).” It is from the perspective of this re-creative purpose that the liturgical function of the *Proslogion* comes into view.

If the human race has been so tragically cursed and blinded to the presence of the God that saturates all of reality, can there be any hope? More to the point, what solution can be offered if Anselm can claim to have been re-created and yet still not see God, as he does in the first chapter:

> You have created and *re-created* me,
> all the good I have comes from you,
> and still I do not know you (*Proslogion*, 1).

This problem, formulated in terms reminiscent of Plato’s problematic of knowledge laid out in *Meno* and picked up by Augustine in the opening to *The Confessions*, is in fact a central one and is repeatedly addressed in the liturgy. Perhaps a response to this problem is possible since God can perceive and understand things despite not having a body, as explored by Anselm (*Proslogion*, 6). This gives some hope that we may likewise come to a true understanding despite our possession of fallen Adamic bodies. In other words, if God can perceive and understand things without having a body, it becomes possible that we may transcend our corrupted flesh and also come to understanding.
Throughout the *Proslogion*, Anselm responds to his weaknesses by emotionally calling on God to give him light and understanding. The very fact that the entire treatise is written as an address to God immediately exposes a liturgical purpose. In despondency, he repeatedly cries out the words of the Psalmists, questioning God, “O Lord, how long (*Proslogion*, 1)?” Such dramatic use of apostrophe is quite common in the Roman liturgy, the cry of “O!” expressing a yearning desire to make present what is empirically absent.  

Anselm’s outbursts, such as those found in Chapter 18, are significant examples of the psychological, physical, and spiritual depression suffered by poets known as *dorville*, and he often appears to suffer from *acedia*, fearing that his struggles with articulation will, in the end, only produce silence. Likewise, Anselm’s frequent exclamations of joy also invoke liturgical resonance. Chapters 25 and 26 continually proclaim the joy that is found in God. Furthermore, in the Preface, Anselm declares the joy he found when he had finally discovered his argument. The opening declaration of Chapter 18, that he seeks “for joy and gladness,” echoes the assertion at the beginning of the Roman Rite, that the ritual is conducted, “Unto the God of my joy and gladness.”

It is in the cries of dejection, the subsequent requests for illumination, and the exclamations of joy, repeatedly interrupting his thoughts, that we hear most clearly the cry of the liturgy. As G. R. Evans makes clear, it is in these parts that the problem of the human condition is taken up in liturgical terms:

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416 Pickstock, 198.
417 Ibid., 215.
419 For an excellent study of this alternating play of joy and sorrow in the liturgy, and its philosophical import, see Pickstock, *After Writing*, 169-217.
What, then, is the theology to be found in the prayers and meditations, and in the prayerful chapters of the *Proslogion*? It is here that Anselm first comprehensively treats the problem of sin in its implications for the soul, and draws out of it a theology of redemption and the sacraments.\(^\text{420}\)

The poems liturgically set the context for the theological insights that are gathered together by Anselm to be able to work the needed change in himself and his reader.

The preceding observations of the similarity of Anselm’s text to the Roman Liturgy, and the insinuation that there is a corresponding dependence, may be rejected by some readers on the grounds that both Anselm and the Liturgy are borrowing from Scripture. However, it is not coincidental that any cursory glance at a fully annotated version of the *Proslogion* yields a large stock of citations from the Psalms, by far his most cited text. The Psalms were themselves created and used in a liturgical context and Anselm’s familiarity with them came undoubtedly from his own daily recitations. One can almost hear the Psalms being chanted in the background by his fellow monks as the Abbott pens his reflections. For instance, Anselm would have heard the refrain which he evokes three times in Chapters 2-4, twice a week as it appears in the Vulgate of Psalms 14:1 and 53:1 - “the fool says in his heart there is no God.”

Despite the fact that the writings of Anselm seemed to contribute to the initiation of a new movement of private devotional literature separate from the communal liturgy,\(^\text{421}\) it must not be concluded that for this monk the two realms were considered separately. The meditation encouraged by the *Proslogion* is not only to be done in solitary confinement, but with the praying community. Thus, in beginning his famous discussion in Chapter 2, he states, “We believe that you are that thing than which nothing greater can be thought (*Proslogion*, 2).” As Vanderjagt argues, his proof is thereby seen


\(^{421}\) Ward, 35-43.
to escape the subjectivity of the individual and become a communal act of speech.\textsuperscript{422} A similar phenomenon occurs in Chapter 1, where Anselm cries for the Lord to hear and help “us.” Liturgical meditation is the prerogative of a community of worshippers who together help each other overcome the faulty knowledge of the ‘flesh.’ Doxology, then, is a matter of community, of friendship. Anselm’s preoccupation with the theme of friendship is well established,\textsuperscript{423} and, as David Moss points out, his theory of friendship is intimately related to the contemplation of Being itself.\textsuperscript{424} Thus, in Chapter 26, Anselm discusses the community joined in the joy given by the God who transforms humanity: “But surely if another whom you loved in every way as yourself, had that same bliss, your joy would be double, for you would rejoice no less for him than for yourself (\textit{Proslogion}, 25).” The experience of the joy of God is magnified by human beings sharing it together in the liturgical setting of the Church and is the solution to Anselm’s initial private despair when he says, “I sought for peace within myself, and in the depths of my heart I found trouble and sorrow (\textit{Proslogion}, 2).” It is the Church and its liturgy that allow us to escape the confinement of corrupted human flesh after the Fall.

The very problem that seems to be driving the composition of the \textit{Proslogion} is specifically solved by the reception of the bread and wine of the Eucharist. To understand what role the Eucharist in particular plays in the conception of the \textit{Proslogion}, we must first attempt to construct what Anselm’s view of the Eucharist might have been. Unfortunately, Anselm rarely explicitly talks about the liturgy in his treatises. The most

\textsuperscript{422} Vanderjagt, “Performative Heart,” 235.
\textsuperscript{423} For a thorough yet concise treatment of friendship in Anselm read “The Nature and Importance of Friendship”, Ch. 7 in Southern, 138-165.
comprehensive discussion is found in letters to Walrum, Bishop of Naumburg, concerning the schism between the Greek and Latin churches regarding the use of leavened or unleavened bread. Earlier, Anselm’s master Lanfranc had engaged in a heated debate with Berengar, who had said that it was against common sense to believe that the bread and wine actually became the body and blood of Christ. It was out of this argument that the doctrine of transubstantiation became formulated, but Anselm never actually comments directly on the debate.

Anselm’s view on the Eucharist is best discovered by reading his *Prayer Before Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ*. In the prayer Anselm lays out clearly his view that the Eucharist is efficacious, saying,

> Thank you for the good gift of this your holy Body and Blood, which I desire to receive, as cleansing from sin, and for a defense against it

*(Prayer Before Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ).*

Even more explicitly linking the Eucharist to the problem of the human nature after the fall, Anselm states later,

> by virtue of this sacrament I may deserve to be planted in the likeness of your death and resurrection, by mortifying the *old man*, and by *renewal* of the life of righteousness.

*(Prayer Before Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ).*

In the same prayer, he further sees the Eucharist as allowing him to become a member of the body of Christ, the Church, and to receive a new body not tarnished by the Fall at the future Resurrection.

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425 Southern, 43-46.
426 In agreement with Evans, 35, 104.
Not only does the Eucharist help counteract the stagnation of the Fall, but, in the *Meditation on Human Redemption* it is seen as the only way to overcome its tainting effects on a regular basis:

You were a bond-slave and by this man you are free. By him you are brought back from exile, lost, you are restored, dead, you are raised. Chew this, bite it, suck it, let your heart swallow it, when your mouth receives the body and blood of your Redeemer. Make it in this life your daily bread, your food, your way-bread, for through this and not otherwise than through this, will you remain in Christ and Christ in you, and your joy will be full (*Meditation on Human Redemption*).

Anselm boldly declares in these two writings that it is only through the reception of the Eucharist that one receives the new life promised through Christ and thus overcomes the fallen nature that is the curse of the fool. Surely these observations counter assertions, such as Evans’, that “the Eucharist was not of prime importance as a regular event in parish life, but that the forgiveness of sins was central; […] it allows a role to those who are not priests in the sacrament of penance which would have been denied them later.”

The Eucharist was most definitely of prime importance, and the other sacraments such as penance complemented the efficacious grace received during the communion.

The question remains as to whether or not the *Proslogion* is actually connected to, or more fundamentally, shaped by, this conception of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is intrinsically linked to the *Proslogion*, and is, in fact, the solution to the very problem that drives Anselm’s quest for clearer understanding of his faith throughout the text. In the concluding poem of Chapter 26, the Eucharist is revealed as the ultimate goal that the entire treatise was working toward, and the vital and beautiful concluding answer to opening poem’s desperate picturing of affairs. Anselm cries

Let me receive
that which you promised through your truth,

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427 Evans, 103.
‘that my joy may be full’.

God of truth,
I ask that I may receive,
so that my joy may be full.
Meanwhile, let my mind meditate on it,
let my tongue speak of it,
let my heart love it,
let my mouth preach it,
let my soul hunger for it,
my flesh thirst for it,
and my whole being desire it,
until I enter into the joy of my Lord,
who is God one and triune, blessed forever. Amen (Proslogion, 26).

Twice here Anselm asks to ‘receive’ from God his joy, and that twice in the
Prayer Before Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ he speaks of receiving the wine
and bread, saying “your holy Body and Blood, which I desire to receive” and “A sinner, I
presume to receive these gifts”? To a monk such as Anselm, who was daily engaged in
the liturgy, the repeated cry “let me receive” would have an instantaneous link to the
Eucharist. Furthermore, the pattern of the words, “let my mind meditate on it, let my
tongue speak of it, let my heart love it, let my mouth preach it, let my soul hunger for it,
my flesh thirst for it, and my whole being desire it,” is reminiscent of the earlier cited
“Chew this, bite it, suck it, let your heart swallow it,” found in the Meditation on Human
Redemption. These links with the two central Eucharistic texts in the Anselmian corpus
and the concluding Trinitarian formula help place this prayer in a liturgical framework
deliberately reminiscent of the Eucharist.

Yet, the significance of this last poem has not yet been fully explicated, for we
have yet to discuss Anselm’s use of “my flesh thirsts for it [the reception]”. In his
thorough analysis of the use of the word ‘flesh’ in the Anselmian corpus, Gollnick finds
an intrinsic parallel to the problem of the ‘flesh’ after the Fall and the ‘flesh’ of Christ as
our redemption. In Anselm’s theological system, the word flesh becomes a key motif that guides his theology, for flesh can be either evil (as in the fallen nature), neutral (as in the body as a material object), or positive (always linked to Christ). The word ‘flesh’ links together under one motif many key doctrines, including the history of salvation seen in the Creation, Fall, and Redemption. It is this understanding of flesh that gives the Eucharist such a central position in Anselm’s work, because it is the means of transforming the nature of the Fool into that of the new creation found in Christ. Just as the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, so partakers in the Eucharist become transformed in their earthly Adamic bodies to the image of the risen Lord. The contemplative setting of the monks allowed them to focus on the transformative power of the Eucharist, which brought the present moment closer to the heavenly transformation that awaited them in the future. Given this transforming potential, it is no wonder Anselm’s ‘flesh’ longed to receive God’s aid.

The Proslogion uses this notion of the change inherent in the Eucharist as a guide to the role that the treatise itself might play in the life of the reader. Anselm actually places the problem faced by the reader in Eucharistic terms at the beginning of the work saying,

Once man did eat angels’ food,  
and now he hungers for it;  
now he eats the bread of sorrow,  
which he knew nothing of (Proslogion, 1).

The term ‘angel’s food’ and ‘bread’ here would have immediately conjured the idea of the Eucharist in the mind of the mediaeval reader (most of whom were also monks), and

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428 For a comprehensive view of the different connotations of “flesh” for Anselm see the chart in Gollnick, 128.
429 Ibid., 13.
thus, the loss of the knowledge of the presence of God is placed in the language of the Eucharist.

Humanity once received the life-changing knowledge of God, but now it only receives the corrupt knowledge of evil. Just as the old nature’s ‘flesh’ is transformed by the flesh of Christ in the Eucharist, the incomplete knowledge of God may be transformed by the meditations on God with which Anselm has been led us to engage. Yet, these meditations are not effective in and of themselves, but only in the liturgical framework which Anselm experienced daily. It is through liturgical repetition and meditation that “mere words” are distinguished from something known “in the heart.”

Conclusion

An examination of the Proslogion in its entirety uncovers a liturgical premise and purpose which fundamentally situates even the apodictic ontological argument. Anselm believes in God and wishes to understand that belief, thereby repairing the damage done to human reason and emotion at the Fall and exposing the folly of the Fool. Consistent with the apophatic tradition, Anselm recognizes that God is greater than anything that can be conceived by the human mind (Chapter 16), yet he still desires “to understand a little of your truth.” Being situated in a community whose everyday life was erected around a quest for God, Anselm created a treatise composed of series of meditations and prayers which, modeled on the Eucharistic transformation of the Adamic flesh, are intended to lift the mind out of its sinful constrictions and, through the sharing of such heart-felt knowledge with the Christian community and the illuminating power of God, renew that mind so that it may more resemble and share in the mind of Christ. Thus, in keeping with the ‘joy’ obtained in the community of the Church, which, in Chapter 26, Anselm describes as overflowing, as “fuller than fullness”, it seems that liturgical expression, situated in the abundant joy of the Church, enables one to exceed one’s own limits,

430 Proslogion, 1, (trans Ward, 244).
namely, the limits of human reason and sensory perception caused by our fallenness. It is precisely this liturgical dimension that allows the reader to understand the complex relationship between the poetic and logical modes of Anselmian discourse. Although they are at times distinguishable in style and tone, this is a result of the Augustinian project of the Christian rhetor, who deftly uses clearer language to delve into difficult philosophical problems and exalted beauteous language to persuade the reader to imbibe and ingest the Truth of the words. Liturgical purpose underlies the entirety of the Proslogion and points towards an entirely different mode of theological discourse, one which does not excoriate logic yet does not unduly exalt it at the same time. In this meditation, he presents a method of theology that does not pretend to be detached from the reality to which it speaks, but which cries out in poetic emotion to the very object of his thought – the Unthinkable.

This apophatic movement is most evident in the midst of the Proslogion where Anselm clarifies his earlier formula “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought” by declaring, “You are also something greater than can be thought (Proslogion, 15).” Logic does not give sole governance over all of human reality; it has its limits secured in place by God, yet remains an invaluable tool to the Christian when it is put in its proper place. Furthermore, any scientific reductionism anachronistically read from the Enlightenment back into the medieval monastic and Scholastic period is confronted by the frequent use of the dialogue structure, which points to a collective and tentative acquisition of knowledge. Brian Stock’s work is helpful when he points out that

\[\text{Proslogion}\]

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431 Cur Deus Homo, 2.15, “the deeds he did were done wisely, even though the reasoning behind them may not be understood by us.”

Anselm regarded his written work as a stage in an incomplete process of dialogue with himself and his monastic brethren. Carruthers insightfully builds upon this observation noting that Anselm even insists that Gaunilo’s response to the Proslogion, and Anselm’s response in turn, always be copied with the text itself, as it was an intrinsic extension of the text, emphasizing therein the communal nature of knowledge as a process.

For Anselm, like Augustine, although reason is the constitutive core of humanity, it is not the disengaged reason of modern scientific philosophy but an impassioned introspective reflection on the nature of Creation, and more specifically the human mind. Thus, we are not surprised by the fact that the most influential works of both men, The Confessions and Proslogion respectively, are both written as direct addresses to God, with passages of deep philosophic reflection interspersed with powerful poetic cries to their Creator for enlightenment. Anselm does not separate the desire for understanding from the act of reason but constantly stresses the importance of love and knowledge being fused in the “heart.” As Vanderjagt points out, “the central place of faithful activity for Anselm is the heart, specifically his own heart.” This entails a deep “thirst” for meditation. This is liturgical philosophy that sees the desire for understanding God as something to be embraced, as it is necessary for all human reflection.

Anselm distinguishes between mere words that are simply “said” in the heart, and true understanding that exists in the “heart” as a result of a thought’s correspondence to

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434 Carruthers, 213.
436 This doxological consummation of philosophy is the central thesis that guides Catherine Pickstock in After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy.
reality. Unlike purely speculative philosophy, Anselm asserts that his heart’s desire, not unimpassioned reason, will lead him to truth, since the highest truths cannot be encapsulated in formulae. Here we can easily see how the emotive dimension of poetry can enhance the discursive mode of logic, allowing Anselm a greater experience of the understanding, love, and joy of God whom he seeks.

However, it is this very fact that knowledge is acquired through desire that stops the Anselmian project. The bible teaches that the heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure (Jeremiah 17:9), while the human mind is also marred by Adam’s Fall. The opening chapter of the *Proslogion* identifies this as the main problematic of the work; “I was made in order to see You, and I have not yet accomplished what I was made for. How wretched man’s lot is when he has lost that for which he was made! Oh how hard and cruel was that Fall (*Proslogion*, 1)” These poetic lines demarcate the purpose for the work, to overcome the effect of the Fall on the mind and heart. As a result, we discover the *Proslogion* to be the ultimate fusion of the poetic and logical modes of discourse, with emotional pleas to God, such as this, interspersed with rigorous logic, such as that of the ontological argument. The prayer language is inherently doxological, and models itself on the Eucharistic liturgy. If the monks indeed read a chapter of the *Proslogion* each week during the reading hour, one can see that the liturgical purpose was not simply metaphorical but may have been lived out in the lives of the gathered monastic brethren.

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437 *Proslogion*, 4, 7, and 23. This indicates that Anselm does not adhere to a representational model of knowledge, where ideas are just ideal ethereal figments of truth, but an ontological model, where the ideal and the real are fused in the heart. This assertion is supported by Anselm’s personification of the idea he searched for in the Preface, in which the thought exists outside his mind, he searches for it, and then despondent, he tries to resist it when it “forces itself” on him.

438 “Lord, I am not trying to make my way to your height, for my understanding is in no way equal to that, but I do desire to understand a little of your truth which my heart already believes and loves (*Proslogion*, 1).”
Carruthers points out that the prayers of Anselm are indeed classic examples of monastic meditation. They are broken up into smaller chunks upon which the reader can ruminate. The graphic imagery appeals to the emotions in order to affect the memory, while the use of the various poetic devices further this mnemonic technology.\textsuperscript{439} These observations are corroborated by the numerous liturgical allusions throughout the treatise.\textsuperscript{440} We have in the \textit{Proslogion} a unique miscegenation of poetry and logic in the form of a meditation that attempts to purify the mind and heart of the reader. Poetry and philosophy - emotion and logic - become intrinsically tied to one another, as the use of language to discover beauty, and the use of language to receive truth. The use of a poetic/dialectic analytic leads to the conclusion that Anselm’s doxological \textit{Proslogion} is both a work of philosophic poetry and poetic philosophy.

\textsuperscript{439} Carruthers, 103-105.
\textsuperscript{440} This aspect of the \textit{Proslogion} is developed further in Chapter 5.
The relationship of poetry and philosophy in Anselm’s theology has been shown to be one of concord and integration. This has been discovered most powerfully in the prosimetrum of the Proslogion. Yet the question of what it is in Anselm’s conception that allowed him to craft such a confluence of poetry and philosophy still remains. The current chapter attempts to situate Anselm’s understanding of poetics and logic into the categories most natural to him, that of pulchritudo and veritas, beauty and truth. In the course of discovery it becomes clear that Anselm has a philosophy of language that is grounded in these two concepts. In short, both beauty and truth are actually ultimately God himself, and human language participates in His very being. Thus, when writing, it is important to be attuned to both the beauty and the truth of one’s words. The truth of poetry and the beauty of philosophy are demonstrated in Anselm’s theology because ultimately his ontology is semiology and his semiology ontology. Poetry is philosophy. Philosophy is poetry. Language is ultimately doxology, and Anselm’s writing both demonstrates and mandates a recognition of the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth.
5.1 *Ordine pulchritudinem*: The Beautiful Order of Words

The category of beauty [*pulchritudo*] is one of great importance in the worldview of Anselm. It represents for him the very design of the Divine Mind and is in fact the perceivable order of God made apparent to humanity in Creation. It is a key term especially in the *Cur Deus Homo*, where Anselm speaks of beauty most often, repeatedly paralleling it with the concept of God’s order [*ordo*]. The concept of beauty is also connected to other related ideas, most importantly those of number, unity, colour, proportion, harmony, shape, and fittingness. It is important to discuss these relationships in Anselm’s work before turning at last to how Anselm views the relationship of beauty to reason and the use of language.

It should not be surprising that the concept of beauty is present in the *Orationes*, since as poetry they are beautiful specimens of the Latin language. In his third prayer to Mary (*Oratio 7*), Anselm cries out to the mother of Jesus:

\[
\text{O pulchra ad intuendum,} \\
\text{amabilis ad contemplandum,} \\
\text{delectabilis ad amandum,} \\
\text{quo evadis capacitatem cordis mei?}
\]

O beautiful to admire,  
amiable to contemplate,  
delectable to desire,  
to where do you evade the capacity of my heart?

The combined rhymes chime to reflect the delectability about which the words speak.

And here we see that beauty is deliberately paired with the concepts of amiability (or loveliness) and delectability (or delight). We also see words reflecting emotional love
(admire, desire) paired with rational reflection (contemplation). For Anselm, the beauty of his topic, Mary, evokes both a physical and intellectual satisfaction.

Of course the physical manifestation of beauty can be distracting and actually harmful to the highest forms of beauty. In writing to the daughter of King Harold, Gunnila, who had once desired to give her life to the monastic orders, Anselm speaks against her father’s desire to give her away in marriage. He writes in *Letter 168*, “Indeed, this King of kings has desired your beauty [*speciem*] as of a lawful spouse; but my sister, how shall I say in what way that man whom you know grasped at the beauty [*pulchritudinem*] of your flesh? (Ps. 44:12)”

However, even the procurement of such physical beauty is utilized by Anselm as a metaphor to the ways in which spiritual beauty should be sought. In a letter to Abbess Mathilda (*Letter 185*), he writes:

Accordingly, as the spouses of carnal men detest external foulness and strive to please by the beauty of their bodies [*pulchritudinem carnis*] and the appropriateness of their dress [*vestium aptitudinem*], in the same way the spiritual spouses of the King of kings, the Son of God, should abhor inner impurity and continually strive to please him by the beauty of their minds [*mentis pulchritudinem*] and the ornaments of their virtues [*ornamenta virtutum*]. Indeed, beauty of mind [*pulchritudo certe mentis*] and nourishment of virtues is purity of heart, to which the sight of God is particularly promised, and nobody is led to this purity without a watchful guard over his heart. For this reason it is written: keep your heart with all vigilance. With regard to this vigilance, the most appropriate and efficacious advice insofar as it depends on human effort, after the grace of God, is this: as long as you are awake, keep your heart busy always and everywhere with reading [*lectione*] or prayer [*oratione*] or the psalms [*psalmis*] or some useful reflection [*cogitatione*] or intention [*intentione*].

There is a deliberate comparison and contrast between *pulchritudinem carnis* and *mentis pulchritudinem*, beauty of body and beauty of mind. Just as wives strive to please by dressing aptly, so the nun, or bride of Christ, should make every effort to ornament herself with virtue. And as one might expect, Anselm sees the best way of doing just that
as spending time in reading, prayer, meditation on the psalms, cogitation, and concentration. Using such means to guard one’s heart ensures a beauty of mind. In other words, to God, thinking adds to one’s beauty.

Anselm believes that God himself desires the beautiful, as he indicates in a letter to Mathilda the Queen of England in *Letter 243*:

If you wish to render these thanks in a proper, good and efficacious manner by your deeds, consider that queen whom it pleased the Lord to choose for himself as his bride from this world. She is the one whom he calls beautiful [*pulchram*], and his love (Sg. 1:14) and his dove (sg. 2:10) in the Scriptures, and of whom it is said to him: The queen is standing at your right hand (Ps. 44:10). She is the one to whom it is said about her bridegroom, Christ: Listen, my daughter, and see; incline your ear, forget your people and your father’s house and the King will desire your beauty [*et concupiscet rex decorem tuum*]. (Ps.; 44:11). Indeed the more she forgets, despising the secular way of life and her father’s dwelling place – that is to say, this world – the more beautiful [*tanto pulchrior*] and lovable she will be seen in the eyes of her spouse. He proved how much he loved her when he did not hesitate to surrender himself freely to death for love of her.

He is of course speaking about the beauty of the church. However, even the spouse of God has others who wish to take such beauty for themselves. In a letter to Umberto (*Letter 262*) Anselm describes just such attempts at ravaging by those who were meant to protect her:

You see, my dearest lord, how our mother, the Church of God, whom God calls his beautiful friend [*pulchram amicam*] and beloved spouse [*dilectam sponsam*], (Sg 4:7, 8) is trampled upon by evil princes, in what manner she is oppressed by those to whom she has been entrusted by God as advocates for her protection, to their own eternal damnation.

Beauty is something sought after, and as such the darkness of humanity often tries to envelop and overcome that in which it delights. Anselm warns even Bishop Rainalm against seeking to be rewarded with the very thing one avoided on account of virtue:

Do not let your heart yearn that God may grant you as a reward for virtue what you scorned for the sake of virtue. You would greatly tarnish the beauty
[decoloras pulchritudinem] of your virtue in the eyes of God if you expected anything paltry and transitory as a reward and consolation from him (Letter 343).

In typically beautiful rhyming prose, Anselm warns about the possibility of discolouring beauty. This is, in fact, one of the great dangers to the Christian life, and offers a key to Anselm’s conception of aesthetics. For he gives a similar warning to Bishop Willelm in Letter 344:

I do not name anything specifically that you should guard against because I think that in the sight of God nothing that in any way disfigures integrity [honestatem decoloret] should be taken lightly. May almighty God so guard and protect your life always and everywhere in everything that no enemy of yours may laugh at any disfigurement of your excellence [naevo pulchritudinis vestrae]. Amen.

Anselm describes the possibility of discolouring honesty as a serious matter. This must be taken in light of his previous discussion of virtue being a form of beauty of the soul. This is implied in his description of someone laughing at a mole or birthmark [naevo] on one’s beauty [pulchritudinis].

The concept of the marring of beauty is an important motif in Anselm’s writing, and one of the ways he sees sin disfiguring the world is through the absence of the colour, thus infecting the beauty once inherent in humanity and the world. Dér Katalin describes how the concept of mundus decolor serves as a metaphor for sin’s effect on the world in his analysis of a section of Oratio 7, the third Marian prayer.441 It begins with a list of created yet now guilty entities [Caelum, sidera, terra, flumina, dies, nox et quaecumque humanae potestati vel utilitati sunt obnoxia] that lost their décor or beauty [amissum decus] but now rejoice that Mary has resuscitated [resuscitata] them by giving ineffable grace [ineffabili gratia donata]. All things were once dead [omnia mortua], losing the dignity of ruling and praising God that they were made for, and were crushed by

oppression and lost their colour \([\textit{decolorabantur}]\) by use in idol worship, which they were not made for. But now these entities rejoice, resuscitated, now they are managed by the rule of believers in God and they are beautified \([\textit{decorantur}]\) by use.

Katalin grounds Anselm’s wordplay between \(\textit{decolorabantur}\) and \(\textit{decorantur}\), decoloring and redecorating, in Augustine’s distinction between beauty of mathematical and logical proportion and beauty found non-rationally in simple properties of sound, light, and colour. Sin causes death \([\textit{mortua}]\) and loss of décor \([\textit{decus}]\) and colour \([\textit{decolorabantur}]\), but redemption results in resuscitation \([\textit{resuscitata}]\) and the return of colour or redecoration \([\textit{decorantur}]\). Here we have a description of the fall and redemption of the world and humanity in fundamentally aesthetic terms. In the poem this process leads to joy and also the declaration that God isn’t only “ruling invisibly over them all, but visibly among them, sanctifying them by use.” When one considers this in conjunction with Anselm’s earlier consideration of dressing beautifully through reading and prayer, one begins to understand that humanity has a role in the process of \(\textit{decorantur}\), of bringing back the colour the world has lost, redeeming by enacting beauty. We find here then a mandate to beautify.

This is in fact, what we see taking place in \(\textit{Oratio 7}\), Anselm uses antithesis and parallelism to beautifully illustrate the very act of redemption. Katalin points out that there are four word pairs that line up to show the fall and recreation enacted:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{idolis serventium} & \quad \text{opressione obruebantur} & \quad \text{abusu} & \quad \text{decolorabantur} \\
\text{Deum laudantium} & \quad \text{dominatu reguntur} & \quad \text{usibus} & \quad \text{Decorantur}
\end{align*}
\]

Thus Anselm artistically contrasts those who serve idols, burying the world in oppression by being abusive and ultimately removing beautiful colour from the world,
with those who praise God, managing the world masterfully by right use and ultimately recolouring the world with beauty.\textsuperscript{442}

As Katalin indicated, there is another aspect necessary for understanding beauty which Anselm also engages, that of order and proportion. We find that the question of sin and redemption also arises in conjunction with this aspect of aesthetic approach. This is the notion which Anselm regularly invokes in his classic \textit{Cur Deus Homo}. In this work we see three major concepts explicitly linked into Anselm’s aesthetic theory: \textit{ordo}, \textit{ratio}, \textit{pulchritudo}. Katalin succinctly elucidates their relationship:

In his writings \textit{ordo}, \textit{ratio}, \textit{pulchritudo} express the same state, the only difference being that \textit{ordo} denotes the nature of a thing, \textit{ratio} the intelligibility of this nature, \textit{pulchritudo} the sensory experience attached to the inward or outward intuition of the thing. All order is by nature beautiful, and all beauty is “the beauty of order”, \textit{ordinis pulchritudo}: to elucidate the genitivus explicativus’ terseness, “beauty as revealed in well-orderedness”.\textsuperscript{443}

Beauty then is explicitly sensory, the experience of the order of a thing. This understanding makes sense of the use of \textit{pulchritudo} we encountered in the \textit{Proslogion} Chapter 17, where the author laments he cannot see God’s \textit{pulchritudinem}.

The relation of beauty to sensory experience is also borne out in its relation to \textit{dillectio}, or delight. The experience of beauty brings pleasure to the human creature. Anselm tells us in \textit{Proslogion} 26 that this delight is found superlatively in God: “\textit{Si delectat pulchritudo: fulgebunt iusti sicut sol}.” Of course Anselm is certain to provide such sensory delight himself by immediately providing a beautiful rhyme: “\textit{Si uelocitas aut fortitudo}.” It is important to notice that it is \textit{pulchritudo} that is the first in the list of

\textsuperscript{442} Dér Katalin, “Mundus Decolor.” Katalin declares: “The loss and return of the world's beauty and colour are linked, in the stylistic perfection of Anselm's preferred devices parallelism and antithesis to good and tyrannical rule, to the two ways in which man uses the world.”

qualities that Anselm turns to illustrate that whatever we love or desire is found in God. There are several words of sensation that describe pleasures which he evokes such as *harmonium* (*Proslogion*, 17) and *melodia* (*Proslogion*, 25), but it is the pleasure afforded to sight *pulchritudo* which begins the major aesthetic category for delectable pleasure. This is natural since the use of sight as a metaphor for knowing is so commonplace in all human languages that its origin as a physical sensation is often forgotten. It is in this sense that *pulchritudo* also comes to indicate the pleasure one discovers in intellectual and spiritual matters. Thus, the delectation of order in any of its appearances is credited to beauty.

It is for this reason that Boso will say:

*Valde pulchrae et rationale sunt istae picturae.* (*Cur Deus Homo*, 2.8)

These pictures of yours are extremely beautiful and in accordance with logic. Anselm’s writing is described through the metaphor of a picture, and it is praised for both beauty and rationality.

In fact, similar to the way a sensory object might be considered appealing, a given solution may be:

*propter utilitatem et rationis pulchritudinem amabilis.*

appealing because of its utility and the beauty of the logic. (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1)

Logic can be beautiful, its usefulness is appealing, and this all rests on the fact that God made the world through order, and thus it appeals to the human mind.

Beauty and reason are not opposites but intimates. Anselm explicitly links beauty to the order and rationality of the world in *Cur Deus Homo* saying:

When such a being desires what is right, he is honouring God, not because he is bestowing anything upon God, but because he is voluntarily subordinating
himself to his will and governance, maintaining his own proper station in life within the natural universe, and, to the best of his ability, maintaining the beauty of the universe itself. (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.15)

The universe has inherent beauty, which is linked to the governance of God, and a human is meant to voluntarily sub-order their lives according to his plan for the natural universe.

Now, humanity of course most often does not order its will to that of God, and sin is a fact of the present condition. This is a matter of attempting to undermine the order and beauty of Creation:

But when a rational being does not wish for what is right, he dishonours God, with regard to himself, since he is not willingly subordinating himself to God’s governance, and is disturbing as far as he is able, the order and beauty of the universe. (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.14)

Once again, sin is a disruptive force, attempting to work against the beauty and order God has intended.

Anselm describes the effect of sin in harsher tones in *De Concordia 7* arguing that we can “assert in accordance with reason” [*possimus etiam rationabiliter asserere*] that we can connect “the imputation of sin to the degeneration and depravity [*minorata et corrupta*] which followed upon the original state of human excellence and strength and beauty [*fortitudine atque pulchritudine*].” Sin has marred the beauty of the original human dignity [*dignitate*].

Now Boso questions how sin can destroy the beauty and order of God without undermining God’s power and honour (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.15). Anselm insists that this does not “besmirch the honour of God to the slightest extent.” If an angel or human tries to undermine divine governance, “Wisdom changes his wrong desire or action into the order and beauty of the universal scheme of things [*universitatis praefatae ordinem et pulchritudinem*] to which I have been referring.” This is done through an agent’s
voluntary recompense or punishment, which, “retain their own proper place in this same universal order and their own regulatory beauty [ordinis pulchritudinem].” If God were not allowing recompense or exacting punishment “a certain ugliness, resulting from the violation of the beauty of order [ordinis pulchritudine deformitas], and God would appear to be failing in his governance.” Here we see that order is explicitly stated to have beauty. Here ordo and pulchritudo are repeatedly and intimately related.

This strange linking of punishment with beauty and order is expressed again in Anselm’s Prayer to St. Nicholas (Oratio 24) where it is considered a virtue to suffer for one’s sin:

\[
in tolerantia tormentorum ordine pulcherrimo subiceret se factura suo factori, quo nihil est iustius.\]

to tolerate the torture of the most beautiful order, he subjects himself to the making of his Maker, that than which nothing is more just.

The point of the passage, echoing the unum argumentum of the Proslogion, is that humanity even in suffering, is part of the beauty of God’s order.

In a more positive way, one begins to realize that a person is actually able to be part of the order and beauty of the universe, even combating the ugliness of the sinful condition. One of the ways this can be done is in the discovery and articulation of the “fitting reasons” by which God orders reality. For example Anselm articulates the “appropriateness” of death coming to humanity through one man’s sin and life being restored through one man’s obedience; of sin originating in a woman, and salvation being born of a woman; and how the devil tricked humanity into suffering sin by a tree, but was

defeated by a man suffering on a tree to defeat sin (Cur Deus Homo, 1.3). He declares: “There are many other things, too, which, if carefully considered, display the indescribable beauty of the fact that our redemption was procured in this way.”

This aesthetic reason, where a form of parallelism gives the delight of beauty, can be found in other instances including the assertion that the “perfect number” of redeemed humans will replace the exact number of angels who were lost to their fall from heaven (Cur Deus Homo, 2.16). In another instance he argues that it was fitting for Jesus to come through a woman alone because he had already made created in the three other alternative methods: a man out of nothing, a woman out of a man, and men and women out of a man and woman (Cur Deus Homo, 3.20). The importance of uniqueness to Anselm here should not be lost. Beauty can play a role in articulating God’s plan and order and has an important relationship with rationality.

It is true that Boso will downplay the role of fitting and appropriate argumentation because he believes it is not useful in engaging unbelievers, since they want “demonstrated […] the logical soundness of the truth, that is: a cogent reason.” (Cur Deus Homo, 1.4) Even still, Boso explains that, “Then, in order that the physical reality of the truth, so to speak, may shine forth all the more, this appropriateness may be set out as pictorial representations of this physical reality.” In other words, it is important to engage in philosophical demonstratio in logical argumentation, but there is still an important role to play for beautiful reasons of fittingness. In a sense, they do what beauty is known for, they give a sensible delight which is added to the logic. Both demonstration and delectio are important considerations for the theological author.
Anselm indicates this importance in introducing the *Cur Deus Homo*, indicating that he had been asked to write down his oral explanations regarding the Christian faith because,

They say that these explanations please them, and they think satisfactory. They make this request not with a view to arriving at faith through reason, but in order that they may take delight in the understanding and contemplation of the things which they believe, and may be, as far as they are able, ‘ready always to give satisfaction to all who ask the reason for the hope that is in us [1 Pet. 3:15] (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1)’.

Anselm sees that his explanations cause delectation and realizes the value therein. But the aesthetic impetus also is partnered with an aesthetic hesitancy, as he worries he cannot make the beauty of his writing fit the beauty of his subject:

Something else which makes me hold back from complying with your request is that not only is the subject-matter precious [*pretioso*], but in conformity with the fact that it is about someone beautiful [*specioso*], ‘with beauty excelling the sons of men’ [Ps. 44:3 Vulg], it is itself correspondingly beautiful in its logic [*speciosa ratione*], beyond the reasoning of men. On this account, I am afraid that, just as I am invariably annoyed by bad painters when I see the Lord himself depicted as of ugly appearance [*informi figura*], the same fault will be found with me, if I presume to plough through such beautiful subject-matter [*decoram materiam*] with an unpolished and contemptible style of writing [*incompto et contemptibili dictamine*] (*Cur Deus Homo*, 1.1).

Here appears a fear that Anselm’s writing may be inferior. This isn’t a question of false humility, but an insight into the writer’s own conception of *dictamen*.

For Anselm, writing is a practice that must attempt to reflect the beauty of its subject matter. This is one of the clearest expressions of his personal poetics; there is to be a unity between the subject and the form of one’s writing. In this case Anselm realizes the magnitude of his subject, God’s redemption of humanity. This is precious and pretty [*pretioso*] and a decorative [*decoram*] material to be sure, but more importantly it is about the Beautiful One [*de specioso*], the Form before the sons of man [*forma prae filiis*].
hominum]. His subject is God, God become man, and thus he needs his writing to resemble that beauty. Of course, God is ultimately beauty itself/Himself, the summa pulchritudo as the sixteenth chapter of the Monologion describes, so the stakes are high. Yet this is his desire, as Brown states, “Throughout his treatise Anselm clearly wants the beauty of his writing, of his “painting” in words, to correspond to the God-given beauty of his subject.”

As discouraging as this task might be, it is conversely encouraging to know that one may see writing demonstrate beauty at all. His writing can participate in beauty itself, and thus place itself under the order of God, and in its own way contribute to the re-ordering and redemption of the effects of sin upon the world. It is important to remember that in his letters Anselm indicated that a beautiful mind [mentis pulchritudinem] needed to be dressed in virtue, and that this was best accomplished by reading, praying, meditating on psalms, thinking, and concentrating. This leads one to ask what one is doing for example in the process of composing a prayer [orationem componerem], which he describes in Letter 28 to the monk Gondulf. Indeed, in writing prayers and meditations with the express purpose of leading penitents into oratio and meditatio, Anselm is effectively helping them in forming a beautiful mind, and thus contributing to their combating the effects of sin upon their very being. Here again is a mandate to create beautiful language.

This recreative intention has been explored earlier in the Proslogion, but it is a driving force throughout Anselm’s writing. In his aesthetic analysis of the Anselmian corpus Hogg sees the redemptive purpose of the poetry in a similar light remarking.

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445 Brown, 335.
“When we read these prayers, therefore, one wonders if the attention to the language, words, rhetorical devices, and other aspects of prosaic perfection is the practical outworking of the mandate to restore the beauty sin has disturbed.”

The poetic impulse in Anselm is to have his language not only imitate, but perpetuate the beauty of God himself in the life and mind of the reader or listener. Poetic creation is a re-creation of the mind in the beauty of its Maker. That he was personally gifted in such poetics is evident in the confidence which Boso dismisses his fears of authorial failure, “This ought not to hold you back either. For you are leaving it open for anyone to speak who can do so better [melius dicat], and similarly you are not prohibiting anyone who does not like your style from writing more beautifully [ut cui dictamen tuum non placet, pulchrius non scribat].” (Cur Deus Homo, 1.1) Of course this is actually Anselm who is writing through Boso, in a sense challenging any reader who despises his work to dictate more pleasing, and inscribe more beautifully.

That Anselm’s writing lived up to his personal challenge is attested to by its influence in history. The beauty of his work has been recreating its readers into beautiful minds for almost a millennium, and his words continue to inspire not only by their content, or by their form, but by the very example and precedent they set. The assessment of Anselm’s acumen in theological aesthetics can have no finer a vocalist than Hans Urs Von Balthasar who declared his writings “radiant and perfectly balanced” and “the acme of Christian aesthetics.”

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5.2 Veritas Enunciatione: The Truthful Word

In the writing of Anselm, no concept is given as explicit a treatment as that of veritas. Truth is a central term in all of his writing, and he dedicates an entire tractate to it in De Veritate. In the Preface to On Truth he explains that it deals with truth and the question of “what it is and in what things it is customarily said to be found.” The work is a dialogue between a student and his master. This master is Anselm as the student quotes his Monologion in his opening question (Chapter 1). He points out that for Anselm, of course, Truth is ultimately God himself, and he has said as much in his earlier work, also indicating that truth has neither beginning nor end.

The question immediately turns to one of epistemology, how humans can have knowledge of the truth, and thus Chapter 2 deals with “the signification of truth and of the two truths of statements. The teacher begins saying, “We will first seek, then, what truth there might be in speech.” The general theory of participatory truth is immediately introduced by the student, “something is true only by participating in the truth and therefore the truth of the true is in the true itself.” A discussion of signifying truth through words develops with Anselm declaring, “Let us see then whether speech itself or its signification or some one of the things which is put into the definition of a statement might be what you are looking for.” In coming to this definition of truth in speech the master concludes, “And again when it signifies what is is, it is true signification.” This is in accordance with Aristotelian realism that holds that a proposition is true when it corresponds to reality, similar to what is known in modern philosophical parlance as the correspondence theory of truth. However, Peter King offers an important caveat about the Aristotelian position in relation to the modern conception saying, “But truth does not
consist in correspondence, even if it depends on it; truth consists in correctness, and as such is a property of tokened sentences."

*Veritas* is certainly for Anselm most importantly linked to *rectitudo*. The Teacher argues that when it comes to verbal signification, “truth is no difference from rectitude.” Truth is rectitude. In other words, truth in speech comes from rectitude of signification, that is, words *correctly* indicating the reality they describe. The student then interjects with a seeming difficulty: even when one speaks what is not, it seems to signify correctly in that it signifies what the speaker wishes to propose. In other words, just because a sentence doesn’t indicate a truth in reality, it does correctly indicate the falsehood to which it intentionally attests. It seems to the student then that if it signifies as it should it is signifying correctly.

The teacher responds to this *aporia* by stating that there is a sense in which a proposition is true simply by being “a well-formed sentence.” This is rectitude of signification. However, there is a second, and more important, sense of rectitude in speech and that is when it correctly fulfills its function, which is to indicate the reality of a fact or event. Anselm speaks of these two instances of truth in signification saying:

> But when it says that what is is, it doubly does what it ought to since it signifies both what it undertakes to signify, and is a well-formed sentence. When it signifies that what is is, by right and true use it is called a statement because of that rectitude and truth, but not when it signifies what is not is. The standard case is had when it fulfils its function rather than when it does not. Indeed, its ability to signify that a thing is when it is not is parasitic on its standardly signifying that what is is and what is not is not. *(On Truth, 2)*

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Anselm’s point is that a properly-formed sentence always has truth in one sense, rectitude of signifying ability, but whether or not it has truth in the more significant sense, truth of signifying reality with rectitude, is mutable.\textsuperscript{449}

The student accepts that Anselm has “sufficiently distinguished between the two truths of an utterance.” The teacher will add by concluding that in the truth of signification these observations about spoken statements \textit{[enuntiationes]} also hold true for other signs including script and sign language.

The third chapter is a short statement to the effect that thought is said to be true when it has rectitude. Thus not only speech, or writing, but thinking itself is correctly in the truth only when it has rectitude. Chapter 4 continues to expand the link between \textit{veritas} and \textit{rectitudio}, this time applying it to the concept of human will. An action is right, or true, when it has rectitude. A will can “stand in the truth” or not (John 8:44) depending on whether it functions as it ought. In other words, volition is true when it wills what God created it to do. This line of thinking is expanded in Chapter 5 where an action is said to have truth. “Doing the truth” is the same thing as “acting well”. Here it becomes apparent that Anselm’s notion of truth does not only relate to epistemology, but to ethics as well. His notion of Truth is an expansive concept, and it also has relevance to the question of human sensation. The sixth chapter explains that the empirical senses contain rectitude when they relate what they can, but it is important to note that it is the “judgement of the soul” where the possibility of rectitude or falsehood arises when we say that our senses “deceive us.”

\textsuperscript{449} Ibid., 106. King further clarifies that “truth of signification” is when the sentence expresses as it is supposed to. I.e. is grammatically correct. Truth of form. The second type of truth is when what is signified by the sentence is so in reality.”
Anselm’s definition of truth moves on in Chapter 7 to cover all that exists, as “whatever is, truly is, insofar as it is such as it is.” There is rectitude in existence. In this sense, Truth is the source of being. “Therefore, there is truth in the essence of all things, because it is by being in the highest truth that they exist.” This is because “anything that exists, exists rightly.” In a short matter of time Anselm has created an ontological participatory theory of truth that encompasses epistemology (truth of statements and the senses), ethics (truth of the will), and metaphysics (truth of being). In Chapter 10 then, it is unsurprising that he declares “the highest truth is rectitude.” This *summa veritas* is “the cause of all other truth and rectitude but nothing is the cause of it.” Here we see God as the source of all truth and rectitude, whether in statements, the will, or being itself.\footnote{Ibid., 107. King states, “Anselm is here trying to link his theory of semantic truth with his more general theological view that God, who is eternal, is Truth: since his ontology already contains an eternal being, he adds nothing by having eternal truths, and therefore (in some sense) eternal truth-bearers are distinct from statements. But the details of his account depend on his views in the philosophy of religion rather than the philosophy of language, so we will not explore them here.”} God is the ultimate object of philosophy, the love of wisdom.

In continuing his “investigation of truth”, Anselm now offers a precise definition in Chapter 11: “Therefore we can, unless I am mistaken, define truth as a rectitude perceptible by mind alone.” One might be confused and fear that Anselm is now reducing truth only to propositional philosophy, but his conception of mind is much more refined than that. To Anselm, the mind is related to the heart and soul of a being, it is a word that can be a surrogate to the whole person. The point he is making is that truth is the appearance of rectitude to the human being. Truth is the revelation of being itself to the human being. Truth is God himself, perceived by the human mind.\footnote{For further exploration of Anselm’s conception of truth see Thomas Williams and Sandra Visser, “Anselm on Truth,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*, eds. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 204-221.} Of course, God is beyond what the human mind is capable of grasping, but anything that the human
mind correctly grasps finds its source in God. Participation in God is the reality of all truth – metaphysically, epistemologically, and ethically.

This is important to our subject matter because Anselm has defined the goal of all signification to indicate reality with rectitude. Every word, sentence, utterance, thought, reflection, meditation, prayer, action or writing is meant to participate in the truth of God. This sheds light on what Anselm is doing in his *dictamen*; he is writing to bring the truth of God into human perception. It is a high task indeed, and yet it is an exceedingly honouring and exciting one – to make God Himself accessible through words. If this is the case, then Anselm’s biggest fear would be to signify what is not, to inadvertently lie and thus lack rectitude. Similarly, he must be careful not to obscure the truth he hopes to reveal, and thus his writing must embody clarity. These factors help highlight why he insists on so often using “reason alone” in his treatises, as reason is the very entity that allows one to perceive the truth.

Furthermore, the use of logical steps is important as it allows the truth to be more easily apparent. This is why he ordered his discussion of truth in *De Veritate* the way he did, “in order that I might lead you from the more known to the less known (Chapter 9).” The student replies gratefully, “It was for my profit that you led me in the order you did.” Here we see that *veritas* is intimately connected with *ordo*. In fact, he begins the entire work pointing out that some copyists had rendered his work with a lack of rectitude because they failed to put them in the right order. Anselm concludes his Preface saying:

Although these treatises do not cohere by any continuity of dictation, their matter and similarity of style demanded they be written in the order that I have listed them. Therefore although they were transcribed by certain hasty souls in another order, before they were completed, I wish them to be arranged as I now have stated (*On Truth*, Preface).
Order is important, it is a matter of truth being revealed or not revealed, of God being perceived or not. Even the ordering of three books together takes on significance.

Related to the idea of truth being rectitude is the concept of free will given in *On Free Will*. Anselm gives the somewhat counterintuitive definition saying “liberty of will is the capacity for preserving rectitude of the will for the sake of rectitude itself (Chapter 3).” His point is that human sin has rendered people unable to exercise their true free will, its true capacity has been captured. He declares that “now they cannot use that freedom without a grace other than that which they previously had (Chapter 3).” He states again later that in regards to free will the person “cannot regain it unless God restores it (Chapter 10).” This introduces the fascinating idea that if one can help another turn to God, who alone can help restore free will, they will have played a part in God’s redemption of humanity. Even just drawing attention to this state of affairs by declaring its truth, one may be an instrument for another to find redemption. This gives a personal impetus for declaring truth in speech.

This relationship of truth to redemption is important in understanding Anselm’s approach towards unbelievers in his writing. He does largely write for a Christian audience, but he does see it as important to remember that truth can be presented in such a way as to help the unbeliever come to faith. This is, in fact, one of the reasons he crafts *Cur Deus Homo*, to make the truth of redemption explicitly clear. He is, still mainly writing for believers who want to understand their faith better, much as his *Proslogion* is taken from the perspective of one trying to understand what he believes. Yet Anselm also has an eye for the unbeliever, and is in many ways equipping Christians to give
reasons to them so that they may possibly experience God. Boso gives indication to this effect in Chapter 3 saying:

Allow me, then, to use the words characteristic of unbelievers. For it is only fair, at a time when we are keen to explore the logic of our faith, to set out the objections of those who are totally unwilling to come to this faith without a logical reason for doing so. I grant that they are in search of logic because they do not believe, whereas we are seeing it because we do believe. Nevertheless, the object of our quest is one and the same.

His point is that logic can help provide the unbeliever with a reason to “come to this faith.” This means that when Anselm writes philosophical explorations of matters of faith, he may very well provide an unbeliever with a logical reason to come to faith in Christ. Thus, his writing may actually bring further redemption to the fallen world. As indicated earlier, this seems to also be the reason why Anselm, in the Proslogion, attempts to show why the Fool is foolish to say in his heart there is no God. Truth in writing has a redemptive and transformative potential.

A final observation on the idea of dictamen participating in God’s truth has to do with Anselm’s advice to a young writer monk, his nephew. In Letter 290 to his nephew, also named Anselm, he writes: “Strive to understand the value of correct grammar and accustom yourself to writing daily, chiefly in prose. Do not be fond of writing in a difficult style but in a plain and clear one [Et ne multum ames difficile dictare, sed plane et rationabiliter].” Anselm instructs his nephew to practice writing daily, obviously seeing dictamen as an important occupation and something that needs constant attention. He also indicates that such writing needs to be done “clearly and rationally.”

Clarity and reasonability are virtues of proper signification as they allow the truth to be presented in a way that does not distract or, worse yet, mislead the intended audience from God’s participation in the text. As a writer then, Anselm could hope for
nothing more than for the Truth himself to participate in his *dictamen*. The clarity of rectitude in truth should not be lost in the difficulty of a multitude of words.

5.3 *Summa Veritas, Summa Pulchritudo, Summa Unitas*: Theontic Semiotics

It is the final question of the relationship of Truth and Beauty to which we must turn, nearing the end of our exploration. In our opening chapter, it was discovered that Augustine proposed a theory of language in which grammar was concerned with the sign itself, while dialectic was related to the meaning behind the sign, or the signified. If we follow Anselm, as he follows Augustine, in seeing logic and poetry as intrinsic aspects of all language use, instead of entirely discrete fields, we can begin to see how they differ and relate by an examination of their concern for Truth and Beauty. In common usage, philosophy appears to be concerned primarily with Truth, while poetry has a preoccupation with matters of Beauty. Perhaps another way of expressing this would be to say that poetry is more concerned with the pleasure afforded by language, while philosophy is more concerned with the knowledge gained by language. This, of course, should not be taken to mean that poetry is unconcerned with knowledge or that logic does not of itself produce a pleasure. Instead, we must see these assertions as a matter of degree, and that poetry and logic are not so much opposites as two sides of the same coin, each emphasizing an element that the other by its very nature must also contain. The common bond which both poetry and logic share is that they are both grounded upon the constraints of language. There is a unity inherent in the Augustinian distinction between dialectic and rhetoric, or the transcendentals of Truth and Beauty, that must not be
forgotten, however much we as humans need to distinguish them for theoretical purposes. They are both instances of language that participate in God.

Anselm does not regularly think in the categories of philosophy and poetry, though he no doubt understood their referents. His major categories were *dictamen*, *meditatio*, and *oratio*. And each of these could be said to have beauty or truth or ideally, both beauty and truth. This is because the purpose of such activities is to participate in the divine being. They have truth when they do this with rectitude, and they have beauty when their order produces delight. Ultimately, beauty and truth are both God, and thus are united. Anselm makes this clear in *Monologion* 16 when he describes God as the supreme nature:

> It is therefore, supreme essence, supreme life, supreme reason, supreme health, supreme justice, supreme wisdom, supreme truth, supreme goodness, supreme greatness, supreme beauty, supreme immortality, supreme incorruptibility, supreme immutability, supreme happiness, supreme eternity, supreme power, supreme unity. All this is nothing other than being supremely, and living supremely. And so on.

The Supreme Being is Supreme Truth and Supreme Beauty! This passage serves to underscore why Anselm reacts so negatively to the nominalism of Roscelin and the new logicians - in denying the existence of universals they are actually, in his conception, denying the existence of God. Denying that adjectives point to a real and existent property of beauty that substances/nouns actually share is tantamount to denying that God exists in Anselm’s ontology and semiology.

The unification of superlative perfections indicated in the *Monologion* passage above is at the heart of Anselm’s participatory ontology. And this ontology is

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452 For an excellent discussion of the debate between Schmitt and Hopkins over whether or not participation is a concept Anselm takes up from Augustine or consciously rejects in the *Monologion* see: Felix Baffour Asare Asiedu, “Anselm and the Augustinian Tradition: Deference and Innovation in the
distinctly related to semiology.\textsuperscript{453} One notices that this list of God’s properties seems at first to suggest that they might be a list of qualities of which God has possession. However, this is exactly what Anselm rejects. Just before this section in *Monologion* 16 Anselm denies that “the supremely good substance is called ‘just’ by its participating in a quality (in this case, justice), rather than through itself.” Instead he declares that “the supreme nature is justice itself.” There is no difference between ‘just’ and ‘justice’, between adjective and noun. God is justice itself. One can say God is ‘just’, but it is simply equivalent to saying that he is ‘being justice.’ Anselm then goes on to introduce the above passage on the supreme nature with its preponderance of *summa* clauses by saying:

> Justice is but one instance. The same conclusion applies to everything else that can be said in the same way of the supreme nature. Reason compels understanding to see this. All these terms, then, indicate not a quality or quantity, but what the supreme nature is. And clearly any good thing that the supreme nature is, it is that thing supremely (*Monologion*, 16).

Quality is subsumed into the divine being. This semiotic conception is distinctly linked to his ontic perception.

Anselm’s understanding of language’s participation in God is striking because in a sense he has subsumed the three basic distinctions of language into one God. Aristotle has categorized the three basic types of words into verbs, which indicate action, nouns, which indicate substance, and adjectives, which indicate quality. Through his participatory ontology Anselm is saying that God is all three; a substance, a quality, and an action. God is justice, just, and justifying. God is verity, veridical, and verifying.

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\textsuperscript{453} For the most comprehensive discussion on participation, ontology, and semiology in Anselm see Katherin Rogers, *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury*.
God is beauty, beautiful, and beautifying. This should not be surprising given Anselm’s insistence that God is one. There are no parts in God even though we need to break words down into categories to try and understand Him.

It is here that we see Anselm’s conception of God and language is further support for Catherine Pickstock’s insistence that the Medieval period’s Christian Neo-platonic participatory ontology is an instance of importance to the modern theological circumstance. Modernity’s informational project of exploring the given circumvented the mystery of ontology, and its resistance to seeing existence as participatory ignored the inclusion of all being in the gift of God. Anselm demonstrates a radical orthodoxy that paradoxically embraces the truth of logical argumentation, and the beauty of poetical creation, seeing their ultimate miscegenation in the doxology of the Incarnation.

The unity of quality and substance in God is therefore an important concept even today, and Anselm consistently testifies to it in both form and content through the use of one of his favourite poetic devices - sermo appositus. Loughlin testifies to Anselm’s use of this in his letters pointing to the interesting parallel phrases “cum rationabili delectatione […] cum delectabili ratione.” The parallel of rational delectability and delectable rationality bring about fullness in the understanding. Anselm uses this poetic technique to great theological affect in the case of the difficult doctrine of the Trinity by referring to the ineffabilem trinam unitatem et unam trinitatem. God as Triune may certainly be ineffable but Anselm’s poetic-philosophic phraseology of “triple singularity and singular triplicity” is much better than the oft-cited Three-in-One. The use of adjective-noun juxtaposition allows the truth that God’s being is not just three (quality or

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454 Pickstock, 267-273.
455 Loughlin, 137.
substance) or one (quality or substance) but the multiple unity and united multiplicity of who He is in Himself. Furthermore, the sonorous parallel of the rhymes adds a beauty to the rationality of the ancient dogma.

In Anselm, theology unites ontology and semiology. Language participates in God’s being, and our being comes from God’s Word (Monologion 10-12). Poetry and philosophy are both dependent upon this ontic semiotics, where words participate in the beautiful truth and truthful beauty. Sadly, this truth is difficult to understand, for humanity cannot glimpse God in his unity, always resorting to albeit important categories. This is the very difficulty Anselm discusses in the Proslogion where he asserts that God is one and there are no parts, but that the human mind is unable to see him in a single glance. Beauty and Truth are in fact identical – they are God himself – yet we use separate words to indicate a certain aspect of God’s presence in the created world as it participates in his Being. Thus as language participates in the Beauty and Truth of God, it is one, though we may label sentences that are particularly beautiful as poetry, or paragraphs expressing difficult truth as philosophy. In reality, all poetry is actually philosophy, and all philosophy is ultimately poetry.

Every syntagm, as Augustine stressed, has a poetic and philosophic dimension. That this appears to leave the current work open to deconstruction, simultaneously asserting the synergy between poetry and philosophy while at the same time rigidly distinguishing their difference, is to forget that Truth and Beauty are to be seen as ontologically one in God. For Anselm, God is Beauty and God is Truth; we simply distinguish them for human purposes, but we must realize that they are ultimately One as aspects of God’s homogenous nature. Likewise, poetry and philosophy are useful as
categories for distinguishing between types of human literature, especially for pedagogical purposes, yet they should not be stressed as completely disparate since they are both united as uses of language and, as writing, contain in themselves both philosophic and poetic aspects which are subject to critical analysis.

We never find an explicit discussion of the relationship of poetry and philosophy by Anselm in his writings. However, in *Cur Deus Homo* we do find a discussion of the relationship between beauty and reason. The Augustinian Neo-Platonic categories of Beauty and Truth can be discovered within Anselm’s writings themselves, even if their articulation is not as detailed as we might hope. As discussed earlier, Anselm argues that many parallels and balances can be found between our Fall and our Redemption that “display the indescribable beauty of the fact that our redemption was procured in this way.” These “beautiful notions are to be viewed like pictures,” which are vapid if they have “nothing solid underlying them.” In an apologetic role, there needs to be a “cogent reason” given for our beliefs, and “Then, in order that the physical reality of the truth, so to speak, may shine forth all the more, these appropriatenesses may be set out as pictorial representations of this physical reality.” In this manner, we have logic and beauty interacting to help display the truth of God. Anselm takes this idea further earlier in the treatise when he argues that the subject matter is “beautiful in its logic, beyond the reasonings of men.” Here, we undeniably see that logic itself has a form of beauty. As Asiedu sums it up, “The good and the beautiful, the ineffable and the

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456 *Cur Deus Homo*, Bk. 1, 3., 268-269.
457 Ibid., Bk. 1, 4, p. 269.
458 Ibid., Bk. 1, 4, p. 269.
459 Cf. Boso’s declaration that “These pictures of yours are extremely beautiful and in accordance with logic.” *Cur Deus Homo*, Bk. 2, 8, 324.
460 Ibid., Bk. 1, 1, p. 267.
sublime, the necessary and the fitting all belong together. Aesthetics, dialectic and the possibility of transcendence all form a seamless fabric in Anselm’s methodology.  

Although it is not explicitly stated, throughout his corpus Anselm seems to employ a category of logic distinct from his idea of “necessary reasons” - that of “fitting reasons.” As seen above, these fitting reasons are not as strong as necessary reasons, yet they are particularly helpful when we encounter some of the limits of logic found in the divine hiddenness. Thus, when we confront a doctrine that cannot be comprehended by reason entirely, Anselm appeals to an aesthetic logic derived from similarities, illustrations, and a sense of what is fitting. Philosophy thus makes use of beauty.

Anselm even places the question of fittingness as a chapter heading, “Whether it is fitting for God to forgive a sin out of mercy alone, without any restitution of what is owed to him.” For this monk, then, to engage with the infinitely beautiful mystery of God intellectually entails what Von Balthasar identifies as “aesthetic reason.” In such reason, we may “take delight,” since it is “more pleasing” and can “afford pleasure.” Even at his most speculative and discursive, Anselm wishes to retain the aesthetics of poetry, and his thoughts move him into liturgical worship. It is on these grounds that Anselm states, “I am afraid that, just as I am invariably annoyed by bad painters when I

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461 Asiedu, 158.
462 This follows closely the discussion by Jasper Hopkins, A Companion to the Study of St. Anselm, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), 50-55.
463 Ibid., 52. For example, take Anselm’s use of both demonstrative and fittingness logic: “Inescapable logic, then, has led us to the conclusion that it is necessary for divine and human nature to combine in one person, and that this cannot come about with respect to more than one person of God; moreover it is evident that it is more fitting for this to happen with respect to the person of the Word than to the other persons. It is, consequently, an inevitability that God the Word and a human being should combine in one person.” Boso commends this presentation as “fortified on both sides by logic.” Cur Deus Homo, Bk. 2, 9, 325.
464 Ibid., Bk. 1, 12., p. 284.
466 Cur Deus Homo, Bk. 1, 1, p. 265.
467 Proslogion, Preface, p. 83.
see the Lord himself depicted as of ugly appearance, the same fault will be found with me, if I presume to plough through such beautiful subject-matter with an unpolished and contemptible style of writing.\textsuperscript{468} The form and style of the language employed to express beautiful truth must be correspondingly beautiful.

A further link between logic and beauty can be found in their connection to Order. Within the same chapter, in an almost climactic set of references, Anselm discusses “the beauty of the universe itself,” “the order and beauty of the universe,” “the order and beauty of the universal scheme of things,” “proper place in this same universal order and […] regulatory beauty,” and, finally, “the beauty of order.”\textsuperscript{469} If both beauty and logic have an essential relationship to Order, it is only fitting to conclude that they are intrinsically related to each other in a beauty of logic and logic of beauty. This relationship is directly exemplified in Anselm’s work through the existence of both poetry that is based upon logical doctrine (\textit{Meditation on Human Redemption}) and logical doctrine that is based upon poetry (the profuse use of the Psalms throughout the logical treatises). Southern argues that the intricate use of assonance and rhyme is not a simple mnemonic device or superfluously aesthetic; instead they are purposeful pointers through the similarities of sound to more eternal congruities and differences that underlie the very nature of the universal order.\textsuperscript{470} In other words, words do not simply arbitrarily indicate things in reality but are themselves intrinsically linked to the very actualities they signify – language is in such a theory integrally ontological. Thus, ontology is related to both logic and poetry in a profound conflagration of thought, emotion, and reality in the

\textsuperscript{468} \textit{Cur Deus Homo}, Bk. 1, 1, 267.  
\textsuperscript{469} \textit{Cur Deus Homo}, Bk. 1, 15, p. 288-289.  
\textsuperscript{470} Southern, \textit{Saint Anselm}, 74-76.
crucible of God’s certain providence. Beauty and Truth echo in Anselm’s very own attempts to meditate on “that-than-which-nothing-greater-can-be-thought.”

Yet, we discover in the *Proslogion* that the fate of Beauty is no better than Truth in light of the Fall; for Anselm states that he “looks all about, and does not see Your beauty. […] But the senses of my soul, because of the ancient weakness of sin, have become hardened and dulled and obstructed (*Proslogion*, 17).” The poetry and logic of the *Proslogion* must work together, in the form of a meditation to reorient the mind and heart of the reader slowly and painstakingly, in the hope of overcoming the tremendous scarring done to the human person by the insidious workings of our own sin. It is meditation that Anselm hails as the solution to his problematic, and it is meditation that properly fuses poetry and logic in a common purpose. If meditation was not usually probative in the modern apologetic sense of the term, it is unsurprising that Anselm may be transforming meditation itself, as we do not find the syllogistic logic in which he engages in earlier forms of meditation. He believes that he has received a revelation from God, an entirely unprecedented moment in the human practice of philosophy; it is unsurprising that his use of meditation would transcend the boundaries that usually delimited the genre. Indeed, he lays the groundwork for later philosophers, such as Descartes and Russell, to adopt the ‘meditation’ as an explicitly philosophical genre of literature.

*Meditatio* is ultimately about the redemption and restoration of the human mind so that it can become less inhibited by the effects of sin. This is why Anselm talks about both *ratio veritate* and *rationis pulchritudo*. By using the mind to reflect upon and participate in the divine nature, both verity and beauty are able to engage in the act of
redeeming. Anselm discusses the role of both beauty and truth in the redemption process in his *Prayer to the Cross*:

- By you the world is renewed and made beautiful with truth, governed by the light of righteousness.
- By you sinful humanity is justified, the condemned are saved, the servants of sin and hell are set free, the dead are raised to life.
- By you the blessed city in heaven is restored and made perfect.

Anselm explicitly says that truth is renewing the world, and that the result is it being made more beautiful. The cross of Christ is restoring and making perfect the city of heaven, in other words, it is bringing the order and plan of God back to the earth.

Of course, Anselm doesn’t just write about beauty and truth and the role it places in restoration, he is also purposefully writing beautifully and truthfully. His language is participating in the beauty and truth of God and thereby participating also in the redemption. Hogg reflects upon the effect of the form and content of this prayer:

- The beauty and appeal of his prose is not intended simply as a memory aid, nor just to channel the reader’s mind to the divine, but to render the restoration of creation in such a way that even his writing mimics that beauty of truth as it imposes its own order and pattern. And in so far as Anselm achieves this goal, the reader too is caught up into that beatific vision and is incorporated into the recreation of redemption wrought by Christ.  

It is remarkable, but human writing is able to be an active participant in the restoration of creation. All of Anselm’s writings are part of this process, whether they are dealing with helping a reader come to grips with how to discover abstract truth as in *De Grammatico*, or when the mind is emotionally charged to the contemplation of theological themes in complicated rhyme structures as in the prayers and meditations.

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471 Hogg, 36.
Yet, to claim that Anselm’s philosophy of writing insists that one’s language is meant to order words in a way that participates in both truth and beauty is not simply a reflection upon his use of language, since he gives advice on how to write. As we saw, he told his nephew to write clearly and rationally, giving every indication that making the truth easily accessible was important. In the earlier Letter 290, to the same nephew, Anselm explicitly also gives instructions on dictamen:

ANSELMUS archiepiscopus:
ANSELMO, carne nepoti, dilectione filio suo carissimo, salutem et benedictionem dei et suam.
Quoniam singulariter te inter omnes consanguineos meos diligo, ut proficias coram deo et coram hominibus desidero.
Quapropter moneo te et praecipio tibi sicut filio dilectissimo, quatenus ad hoc, pro quo te in Anglia dimisi.
sollicite proficere studeas et nullum tempus in otiositate transeas.
In declinatione et virtute grammaticae cognoscenda maxime intende;
in dictamine, et plus in prosa quam in versibus, te exerce.
Super omnia mores et actus tuos coram hominibus
et cor tuum coram deo custodi,
quatenus, cum deo annuente te videro,
de tuo profectu gaudeam,
et tu de mea laetitia gaudeas.
Vale, deo corpus et animam tuam commendō.

Since I love you especially among all my relatives, I long that you may make progress in the sight of God and the sight of men. For this reason I admonish and command you, as my most beloved son, to strive eagerly to make progress in that for which I sent you to England and not to waste any time in idleness. Direct your attention particularly earnestly towards understanding inflection and the power of grammar and work hard at dictation, and more in prose than in verse. Above all, watch your manners and your deeds in the sight of men and your heart in the sight of God so that, when I see you, God granting, I may rejoice in your progress and you may rejoice in my happiness. Farewell, I commend your body and soul to God [Letter 290].

This letter is written near the end of Anselm’s life in June or July 1103, while at Bec, and resembles the later letter which repeats the same theme and which was discussed in 5.2 on truth. Here he is encouraging his nephew to give maximum attention to declensions
and become cognizant of grammar, and to exercise his skills in *dictamen*. He is certain to make sure his nephew understands by this he means *prosa* and not *versibus*. This might lead one to think that he is emphasizing what we might call philosophy over poetry, but this would not take into consideration Anselm’s understanding of *prosa*. When Anselm considers verse, he is thinking of the imitation of the metrical poetry of the Latin classicists, which he considers less useful to be certain. But *prosa* is a form of writing that includes all the poetic devices of which Anselm is so proud including rhyme, alliteration, and balance of clauses. This should be obvious in the manner in which the Latin text of the letter is laid out above, Anselm is in fact utilizing intense rhyme clusters and alliteration. For example he purposefully ends three successive lines with a verb that starts with *d* and ends with the rhyme –*o*. The following fourth line ends again with a verb that starts with *d*, and although it doesn’t rhyme with the –*o* ending it still rhymes with the previous line’s final verb [*dilectissimoldimisi*]. Without going into a full-scale analysis we quickly see other balances and rhymes such as parallel lines beginning with *in declinatione* and *in dictamine* and ending with an –*e* rhyme. The work also opens up and closes with a reference to progressing in the sight of God and men.

Here then we see an express command of an Archbishop to his monastic nephew to work at excelling in writing, especially in prose, and we see this instruction itself laid out in a rationally clear and beautifully poetic fashion in order to participate in that which it indicates. It is a philosophy of composition in a composition of poetry. This is a call to a form of theological literature to which the contemporary writer and scholar should give deliberate consideration and considerable deliberation. This is not to argue that one should privilege one form of writing over and above another. For instance, the discovery
of the incredible balance of poetic and logic in the Prosligion does not lead to the conclusion that all theology should be written in prosimetrum. Anselm has a great fondness for the dialogue and the treatise, utilizing both much more often.

At the same time, the example of Anselm builds a case for the assertion that every theologian should give due consideration to both truth and beauty in both writing and speech. If one is a philosopher, one’s language still participates in the beauty of God, it seems best to give it consideration. If a poet, the truth of God is part of the purpose for all language, it should be given due deliberation. Ultimately, all writing is both poetry and philosophy, however it might be categorized in the library catalogue. And more importantly, all language is doxological as far as it always participates in God. Even still, there is much to be said for a theologian to explore a variety of literary formats, as Anselm realized each has its own strengths. For example, he states that his reason for using a dialogue format in Cur Deus Homo is because “matters which are explored by means of question and answer are clear to many people, particularly slower intellects, and are correspondingly more pleasing (Cur Deus Homo, 1.1).” Here he evokes both clarity and delight, which are in turn related to truth and beauty. Again, the dialogue format serves a doxological purpose.

It is clear that all language participates in God in some fashion but that the writer is able to help shape and mold words in such a manner that the grammar allows more or less of a certain aspect of God’s nature to be experienced. Clear language allows the truth of God to shine forth, while rhyme and alliteration allows the order of the sounds to better the beauty of God impressing itself on the listener. All of these elements of language, as Augustine had taught any medieval writer, are important to master and thus
Anselm encourages practice in writing. As one gains acumen in *dictamen* it is common that the audience can better experience the divine presence.

The doxology of language is further attested to in Anselm’s work by his use of *oratione*. It is an important word representing a sentence or statement or proposition in the philosophical works like *De Trinitate*, capable of and intended to participate in truth. However, Anselm has an entire collection of *Orationes*, prayers directly addressed to God. These prayers are beautiful but they are no less truthful. Likewise by putting his greatest philosophical argument into the form of a prayer, Anselm directly rejects Aristotle’s contention that a prayer is not a suitable vehicle for propositional truth. Aristotle’s opposition of proposition to poetry is undermined by the *Proslogion*, amounting to a declaration that decoration is not a distraction from declamation in deliberation. Doxology is the logos directed at its true source God. As all language participates in the divine, it is by nature inherently doxological. Seeing as this is language’s very nature, Anselm invites writers to attempt to ensure their work is as beautiful and truthful as possible. Every oration is adoration, every line of meditation is fine dictation, for they can combine with the sublime and find within sin’s Divine medication.
CONCLUSION: ANSELM’S EMBLEMS

Anselm is a complex thinker and feeler who would not be hamstrung by “the ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry” described by Plato and echoed down to our modern era by a rigid delineation between poetry and logic, beauty and truth. His was a stringent logic that allowed demonstrable reason a place next to revelation when its principles were based upon necessity. Certitude was afforded the logician, although it was always by nature provisional, and the unbeliever could indeed be led through rational progress into the truth of the faith. Concomitantly, aesthetic placement of words, graphic imagery, and emotional arousal of poetry were utilized by Anselm to bring his reader to a state of meditation upon God. Poetry had in “fittingness” a form of truth, while logic exhibited its own type of beauty. From this perspective, we discover that both the Barthian dilution of the force of logical argument for apologetic purposes and the modernist exaltation of logic to supreme arbitrator of all truth are equally rejected by a careful consideration of Anselm’s entire corpus and his monastic context. Through his daily routine of meditation, Anselm is able to fuse poetry and philosophy into a single activity, which may be used as a weapon in the constant struggle to overcome the frailty of our sinful human condition, and to inch ever closer to the infinitely distant One.

This document has utilized a Poetic/Dialectic methodology in order to research the ways in which poetry and philosophy related in the theology of Anselm. The goal was to examine if there was a distinctly theological conception of that relationship as one of unity, and to explore just how such a unity might express itself in this ancient monk’s
writing. This study thus serves to provide a concrete and historical exploration of a Medieval theologian in support of Radical Orthodoxy’s contention that philosophy is ultimately consummated in doxology through a participatory ontology. As all things participate in God’s being, the very words of a person doing theology are self-consciously able to be simultaneously both poetry and philosophy. In Chapter 2, Anselm’s realm was subjected to analysis to understand his own intellectual and spiritual background and how it informed his personal perspective. We discovered in the Liberal Arts tradition that there was a considerable history of fusion between poetry and philosophy, especially through the verbal arts of the trivium, exemplified by the classic prosimetric textbook *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*. We discovered that likewise, Anselm’s chief logical influence Boethius, the translator of Aristotle to the medieval world, also penned a work of prosimetrum *The Consolation of Philosophy*, in which poetry and philosophy were both employed for the purpose of raising the mind through levels of illumination to the contemplation of God. The writer who most influenced Anselm, both poetically and philosophically, was Augustine, whose treatise *On Christian Teaching* argued for writing in a way that conjoined Beauty and Truth, and he again exemplified it in his own writing. The final and most authoritative influence on Anselm was the Holy Scripture, especially the Psalms upon which he meditated daily. We discovered therein a form of poetry that used rhyme and parallelism to aid mediation, but which supplied a vast store of philosophical content. Thus, Anselm’s major influences all indicated that poetic and philosophic modes of language were not disparate but united.
Chapter 3 explored Anselm’s ensemble, looking at the poetry of the *Orationes* and *Meditationes* as well as the philosophy of his various vigorous treatises. What we discovered was that this prodigious monk was both an accomplished poet and philosopher. Furthermore, meditation was revealed as a major category for Anselm’s thinking which allowed him to integrate both poetry and philosophy. The other major category was *dictamen* and his letters indicate that he regularly integrates what today would be separated as poetic and dialectic projects.

The investigation turned to the *Proslogion* in Chapter 4, Anselm’s most famous and infamous creation. A poetic analytic yielded a deep chiastic poetic structure as well as intensely dense rhyme schemes, alliteration, and parallelism modeled after the Psalms. The dialectic analytic worked through the propositional content of the text, demonstrating how his *unum argumentum* functioned to produce the entirety of its philosophic content. The discussion also explored how its famous Chapters 2-4 are diversely interpreted, concluding that Anselm indeed sought to prove to the Fool that God exists, that he cannot be thought not to exist, and he is everything the Christian faith believes to be true. Finally, our poetic/dialectic synthetics brought light to the genre of the *Proslogion* as that of prosimetrum, both poetic and prosaic, and explored how the poetry and philosophy therein mutually enhanced and advanced one another. Most importantly the meditative purpose of the work was to be performative and transformative, allowing the heart, mind and soul to progressively experience the love, illumination, and joy of God, in a manner analogous to liturgy.

The semiology and ontology of Anselm were discussed in Chapter 5 as a means of understanding Anselm’s fusion of poetry and philosophy in the terms most natural to
him – *veritas* and *pulchritudo*. Truth and beauty were both found ultimately not only to be grounded in, but to actually be identified with, God himself. Anselm’s philosophy of language is predicated on an ontology of participating in the very nature of God. This participatory Christian Neo-platonic ontology, as identified by Catherine Pickstock’s radical orthodoxy, is a robust theological resource for understanding linguistic utterance. Something is true when it has rectitude to its purpose, something is beautiful when it has order that delights, and always God is properly the very being of such properties himself. This leads Anselm to a constructive and productive view of language, where writing and praying and meditating and speaking can all participate in God’s redemption of a fallen world. By displaying beauty and truth in one’s words, God Himself is not appealed to but revealed as real. Every sentence offers an entrance to God’s presence.

Anselm thus both demonstrates and remonstrates theology written in a manner that purposefully integrates beauty and truth. This is done with an understanding that all writing is meant to be poetic philosophy and philosophic poetry, poetic dialectics and dialectic poetics, beautiful verity and veridical beauty. Our study of Anselm thus indicates and predicates that theology acknowledges the imperative optative operative to reexamine its *dictamen*. Amen.
APPENDIX ONE: ANSELM'S PROSLOGION

1. EXCITATIO MENTIS AD CONTEMPLANDUM DEUM.

Eia nunc, homuncio,
 fugae paululum occupationes tuas,
 absconde tempodicam
a tumul/uis cogitationibus tuis.
Abice nunc onerosas curas,
et postpone laboriosas distensiones tuas.
Vaca aliquantulum deo,
 Et requiesce aliquantulum in eo.

"Intra in cubiculum" mentis tuae,
exclude omnia praeter deum
 et quae te iuuent ad quaerendum eum,
et "clauso ostio" quaere eum.

Dic nunc, totum "cor meum".
dic nunc deo:

Quaero uultum tuum:
    uultum tuum, domine, requiro.

Eia nunc ergo tu,
 domine deus meus,
doce cor meum
 ubi et quomodo te quarerat,
 ubi et quomodo te inueniat.
Domine, si hic non es,
 ubi te quaeram absentem?

CHAPTER 1 - A POETIC / DIALECTIC TRANSLATION

1. Excitement of the Mind to Contemplating God

Quick now little man,
    run away from your little occupations,
    hide away a little time
    to yourself from your tumultuous intentions.
Throw away now onerous concerns,
    and postpone your laborious distention.
Be unoccupied a little while for God,
    and quiet down a little while in Him.

Enter into the cubicle of your mind,
    exclude all things except God,
    and that which may help you to seek Him,
    and, the entrance having been shut up, seek Him.
Say now, my whole heart,
    say now to God:

“I quest for Your face;
    Your face, Lord, I request.”

Therefore, quick now You,
    Lord mine Divine,
Teach my heart
    where and how to seek You,
    where and how to find You.
Lord, if you are not here,
    where may I seek You, Absent One?
Si autem ubique es,  
cur non uideo praezentem?  
Sed certe habitas "lucem inaccessibilem".  
Et ubi est lux inaccessibilis?  
Aut quomodo accedam ad lucem inaccessibilem?  
Aut quis me ducet et inducet in illam,  
ut uideam te in illa?  
Deinde quibus signis, qua facie te quieram?  

Numquam te uidi,  
domine deus meus,  
non noui faciem tuam.  
Quid faciet, altissime domine,  
quid faciet iste tuns longinquus exsul?  
Quid faciet seruus tuus anxius amore tui  
et longe proiectus "a facie tua"?  
Anhelat uidere te,  
et nimis abest illi facies tua.  
Accedere ad te desiderat,  
et inaccessibilis est habitatio tua.  
Inuenire te cupit,  
et nescit locum tuum.  
Quaerere te affectat, et ignorant uultum tuum.  
Domine, deus meus es, et dominus meus es,  
et numquam te uidi.

Tu me fecisti et refecisti,  
et omnia mea bona tu mihi contulisti,  
et nondum noui te.  
Deixque ad te uidendum factus sum,  
et nondum feci propter quod factus sum.

But if You are everywhere,  
why do I not see the Present One?  
But certainly You live in inaccessible light.  
And where is inaccessible light?  
Or how may I access inaccessible light?  
Or who will lead me, and who will lead me in,  
in order that I may see You in that light?  
Finally, in which signs, in which face may I seek You?

I have never seen you,  
Lord mine Divine,  
I have not recognized Your face.  
What will he do, Highest Lord?  
What will this far off, distant exile do?  
What will Your servant do, anxious to love You,  
and cast far off from Your face?  
He pants to see You,  
but is very far removed from that, Your face.  
He desires to come near You,  
but Your home is inaccessible.  
He loves to discover You,  
but does not know Your place.  
He aspires to seek You, but he is ignorant of Your face.  
Lord, You are mine Divine, and You are my Lord,  
but I have never seen You.

You have made me and remade me,  
and all my good, You Yourself have bade me,  
but I have not recognized You.  
Finally, I have been made for the purpose of seeing You,  
but I do not yet properly do that which I am made to do.
O misera sors hominis,
cum hoc perdidit ad quod factus est.
O durus et dirus casus ille!
Heu, quid perdidit et quid inuenit,
quid abscessit et quid remansit!
Perdidit beatitudinem ad quam factus est,
et inuenit miseriam propter quam factus non est.
Abscessit sine quo nihil felix est,
et remansit quod per se nonnisi miserum est.
"Manducabat" tunc "homo panem angelorum"
quem nunc esurit,
manducat nunc "panem dolorum",
quem tunc nesciebat.
Heu publicus luctus hominum,
uniuersalis planctus filiorum Adae!
Ille ructabat saturitate,
Nos suspiramus esurie.
Ille abundabat, nos mendicamus.
Ille feliciter tenebat et misere deseruit,
nos infeliciter egemus et miserabiliter desideramus,
et heu, uacui remanemus.

Cur non nobis custodiuit cum facile posses,
quo tam grauiter careremus?
Quare sic nobis obserauit lucem,
et obduxit nos tenebris?
Ut quid nobis abstulit uitam,
et inflixit mortem?
Aerumnosi, unde sumus expulsi,
quo sumus impulsi!
Unde praecipitati, quo obruti!

O unfortunate fate of man,
with this he has lost that which he was made for.
O duress and direst Fall that!
Alas, what man has lost and what he has found,
what he withdrew and what thing continued!
He lost the beatitude by which he was made,
and found sorrow because of that for which he was not made.
He withdrew that without which nothing is happy,
and continued that through which he is nothing but miserable.

Once man ate the bread of angels,
now he is the hungry one.
Now he eats the bread of sorrow,
which once he did not know.
Alas! The public grievance of man,
the universal bereavement of the sons of Adam!
That man belched with satiation,
now we ourselves suspire with emaciation.
That man prospered, we go begging.
That man happily held what he had, and miserably deserted it;
we unhappily lack, and miserably we desire,
and alas, we remain vacant.

Why was he unable to have easily guarded
for us that which we so gravely discarded?
Why, thus, has he barred us access to the light,
and covered us in darkness?
Why has he taken away from us life,
and inflicted death?
Felled suffering, from where have we been expelled?
To where have we been impelled?
From where dispelled? Where have we gone belly up?
A patria in exsilium, a uisione dei in caecitatem nostram.
A iucunditate immortalitatis in amaritudinem et horrorem mortis.
Miseram mutationem!
De quanto bono in quantum malum!
Graue damnum, grauis dolor, graue totum.

Sed heu me miserum, unum de alis miseris filis Euæ elongatis a deo, quid incepi, quid effect?
Quo tendebam, quo deueni? Ad quid aspirabam, in quibus suspiro? "Quaesiusi bona", "et ecce turbatio"!
Tendebam in deum, et offendi in me ipsum.
Requiem quaerabam in secreto meo, Et "tribulationem et dolorem inuent" in intimis meis.
Volebam ridere a "gaudio mentis meae," et cogor rugire "a gemitu cordis mei". Sperabatur laetitia, et ecce unde densentur suspiria!

Et o "tu, domine, usquequo"?
"Usquequo, domine, obliuisci nos", "usquequo auertis faciems tuam" a nobis?
Quando respices et exaudies nos?
Quando illuminabis oculos nostros, et ostendes nobis "faciems tuam"?

From native land to exile, from a vision of God to our blindness!
From amiability of immortality to harshness and horror of post-mortem.
Miserable mutation!
From how great a good to how great an evil!
Grave damage, grave pain, grave everything.

But alas miserable me, one of the changed miserable sons of Eve having been separated from God, what have I incepted, what have I effected?
What did I possess, what have I come to?
To what did I aspire, about what do I suspirae?
I sought goodness, and behold disturbance!
I was extending into God, and I have offended myself.
I was seeking rest in my secrecy, and found tribulation and indignation in my inmost being.
I wanted to laugh at my mind’s joy, and I am compelled to roar at my heart’s groan.
Delight was hoped for, and behold from whence suspirations are multiplied.

Oh! And You, Lord - How long?
How long, Lord, will You forget us, How long do You turn Your face from us?
When will You look back at us and hear us?
When will You illuminate our eyes, and reveal Your face to us?
Quando restitues te nobis?
Respice, domine, exaudi, illumine nos,
ostende nobis te ipsum.
Rexitue te nobis,
  ut bene sit nobis,
sine quo tam male est nobis.
Miserare labores et conatus nostros ad te,
Qui nihil ualemus sine te.
Inuitas nos, "adiuua nos".
Obsecro, domine,
  ne desperem suspirando sed respirem sperando.
Obsecro, domine,
amaricatum est cor meum sue desolatione,
  indulca illud tua consolatione.
Obsecro, domine, esuriens incepi quaerere te,
  ne desinam ieiuus de te.
Famelicus accessi, ne recedam impastus.
Pauper ueni ad diuitem,
  miser ad misericordem;
  ne redeam uacuns et contemptus.
Et si "antequam comedam suspiro",
da uei post suspriia quod comedam.
Domine, incurratus
  non possum nisi deorsum aspicere,
erige me ut possim sursum intendere.
"Iniquitates meae supergressae caput meum"
  oboluunt me.
"et sicut onus graue" grauant me.
Evolute me, exonera me,
  ne "urgetat puteus" eaurum "os soum super me".
Liceat mihi suspicere lucem tuam,
  When will You restore Yourself to us?
Look back Lord, and hear clearly, illuminate us,
  and reveal Yourself to us.
Restore Yourself to us,
  in order that it may be well with us,
  without which it is so ill with us.
Have mercy on our taking pains and making efforts towards You,
we can prevail over nothing without You.
You invite us; Encourage us.
I implore, Lord,
  may I not give up hope expiring, but respire hoping.
I implore, Lord,
  my heart has grown bitter by its desolation,
  sweeten it by Your consolation.
I implore, Lord, I began hungering to search for You,
  may I not finish by fasting from You.
I proceeded famished, may I not recede diminished.
A pauper, I have come to a rich man,
  a miserable man to a merciful man;
  may I not return vacuous and contemptuous.
And if I expire before I eat,
  indeed, after suspirations, allow that I may eat.
Lord, having been made back-bowed,
  I am unable to behold except below,
  erect me in order that I may hold out on high.
My inequities having superseded my head,
  they completely cover me,
  and like a grave burden, they aggravate me.
Extricate me, exonerate me.
  lest their pit shove his mouth over me.
Let me admire Your light,
uel de longe, uel de profundo,
Doce me quaerere te,
et ostende te quaerenti;
quia nec quaerere te possum nisi tu doceas,
\textit{nec inuenire nisi te ostendas}.
Quaeram te desiderando, desiderem quaerendo.
\textit{Inueniam amando, amem inueniendo}.

\textit{Fateor, domine, et gratias ago,}
quia creasti in me hanc imaginem tuam,\textit{ ut tui memori te cogitem, te amem.}
\textit{Sed sic est abolita atritio uitorum,}
sic est offuscata fumo peccatorum,\textit{ ut non possit facere ad quod facta est,}
nisi tu renoues et reformes eam.
\textit{Non tento, domine, penetrare altitudinem tuam,}
quia nullatenus comparo illi intellectum meum;\textit{ sed desidero aliquatenus intelligere ueritatem tuam,}
\textit{quam credit et amat cor meum.}
\textit{Neque enim quaero intelligere ut credam}
sed credo ut intelligam.
\textit{Nam et hoc credo:}
quia "nisi credidero, non intelligam".

either from far off, or out of the depths,
Teach me to seek You,
\textit{and reveal Yourself for seeking;}
since am I able to neither seek You unless You teach,\textit{ nor find unless You reveal Yourself.}
May I seek You by desiring, and desire You by seeking.
May I discover by loving, and love by discovering.

I praise, Lord, and thank with thanksgiving,\textit{ because You have created in me this, Your image,}
in order that I may imagine You, be mindful of You, love You.
But having been so abolished by the abrasion of sin,\textit{ so obfuscated by the fumes of sin,}
it is unable to do that for which it is made,\textit{ unless You would restore and reform it.}
I do not attempt, Lord, to penetrate Your altitude,\textit{ because my aptitude in nowise compares to that;}
but I desire to understand up to a point Your Truth,\textit{ what my heart believes and loves.}
Nor do I seek to understand in order to believe,\textit{ but I believe in order to understand.}
For even this I believe:\textit{ That unless I believe, I will not understand.}
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