Anselm’s unum argumentu
and its Development in St. Bonaventure

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In this article, I show the actual essence of the Anselmian unum argumentum, which has been abundantly misunderstood by modern Philosophers as an “ontological proof”. In particular I detect its original source in Parmenides’ intuition of the reciprocal belonging of Thought and Being, the fundamental principle developed through time by Platonic Tradition. The research implies a reconsideration and redefinition of words, such as ratio and intellectus, which gave rise in modern times (Descartes, Kant, Hegel: I establish a comparison with these authors), since they were not correctly interpreted, to important hermeneutical mistakes. After understanding what Anselm actually meant with his id quo maius cogitari nequit, by means of an analysis of both Monologion and Proslogion, I explain how Bonaventure improves it, by increasing its qualitative meaning (in different ways, but, in short, particularly substituting maius with melius).

Few problems kept philosophers’ minds busy more than the so-called “ontological proof”. Since it was formulated, almost all of them, more or less directly, more or less explicitly, felt the urge to have a confrontation with it.

Why such a consistency? Because in the epochal Anselmian saying is saved and transfigured the core of western philosophy: Parmenides’ intuition about the relationship between Being and Thought.

Parmenides begins his Poem with the description of a real raptus:
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The goddesses lead me on the very much celebrated way / that through every region guides the man who knows.

The revelation of the Truth has, since the very beginning, the tone of something different, compared to what ordinary experience usually offers. The chariot, dragged by horses, is pushed by the daughters of the Sun toward the light, that is, as Sextus Empiricus comments, the condicio sine qua non of the sight.

The poet-philosopher arrives in the presence of Justice (Dike) “that punishes a lot” and who “has the keys that open and close”. She tells Parmenides about the existence of two ways of research:

The one <which says> that it is and that it is not possible that it is not […] The other one <which says> that it is not and that it is not possible that it is.

Here is the most important fragment:

This one [the second way] I declare to you that is an absolutely undetectable path: / because you can neither think (it is in fact impossible), / nor express the not-being.

I add a fragment that, probably, has to be juxtaposed to the previous one:

…in fact thinking implies being.
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In these two verses, there is, in nuce, the whole western philosophy. These other fragments allow us to draw the conclusions:

It is necessary that saying and thinking are being: the being is in fact given, while the nothing is not.\(^7\)

It is the same thing to think and to think that it is.\(^8\)

Ergo, the Thought, when it rises, knows itself as belonging to Being. To think is to think the Being. Thought is not given, but starting from the preliminary positivity of the Being, that funds it and constitutes it \textit{qua talis}.\(^9\) The Being qualifies as the wider horizon, within which the nothing appears as internal determination. The Being is the original + that funds the possibility of the polarity +/-. There is a primary + that establishes the possibility of opposition. This brief introduction reveals already the necessity to recover the essence of \textit{unum argumentum} in its own pureness.

For that purpose, it is indispensable to leave the misleading expression “ontological proof". Anselm talks neither about proof, nor, \textit{a fortiori}, of ontology, which is a neologism coined in XVII century.

To understand the matter, it is not fruitful to neglect the \textit{Monologion}, and to concentrate only on the three brief paragraphs of the \textit{Proslogion}, where the argument is enunciated and exposed, ignoring the twenty-six ones that form the whole book and where those three ones are solidly set. The heart of the

\(^7\) 28 B 6 DK, vv. 2-3.
\(^8\) 28 B 8 DK, v. 38.
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*Monologion* is *ratio* with its own power\(^\text{10}\). What can we know *sola ratione*, within the limits of mere reason?

In the *Prologus*, Anselm let us know, that his mates pressed him in order to obtain a meditation that could satisfy this requirement:

\[
\text{quatenus auctoritate scripturae penitus nihil in ea persuaderetur,}
\text{sed quidquid per singulas investigationes finis assereret, id ita esse}
\text{plano stilo et vulgaribus argumentis simplicique disputacione et}
\text{rationis necessitas breviter cogeret et veritatis claritas patenter}
\text{ostenderet.}\]

The purely rational enquiry is really a theoretical and moral duty, for a Christian thinker.

*Mono-logion* means dialogue of the reason with itself, without any extraneous, further or previous condition. With that, the author does not intend to present himself as subversive toward the tradition, since he states he is a faithful commenter of it. Rather, the point is that authentic Tradition cannot say anything that is in a real contrast with what the soul, in an act of pure interiority, can find inside itself. There is non need of a doctrine of the double truth. The *rationes necessariae* manifest a necessity that is somehow temporary, inasmuch as it needs to be confirmed by a greater authority. Coherently with these premises, the word “God” appears only in the last paragraph, the eightieth.

In the first part of his work, Anselm only shows that

\[
\text{est igitur unum aliquid summe bonum et summe magnum, id est}
\text{sumnum omnium quae sunt.}\]

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It is an attempt to eliminate, where possible, all the presuppositions that cannot
be accepted by an “even mediocre” reason. It is true that, in the prologue of the
Proslogion, Anselm says he tried its composition, because he was unsatisfied by
Monologion’s proofs; but such a dissatisfaction attains to the multiplicity of the
proofs, not to their value; shortly, the argumentum is better because it is unum,
not because it replaces the previous ones. Moreover, we can anticipate, that,
since the four proofs in the Monologion are obtained sola ratione, it is not
acceptable to individuate the difference between the two booklets in the
hendiadys a priori/a posteriori; it is better attested by the couple
ratio/intellectus.

On the other hand, there is a certain unity in the Monologion too, insofar as
the proofs there brought are pooled by one principle: the complex implies the
simple, the different implies the identical, the relative implies the absolute, the
plural implies the one; in just one expression: what subsists per aliud implies
what subsists per se.

The first proof (§ 1) points out the necessity of a unique and identical
good, since goodness is attributed in the same way to different and many things.
The goods are goods not per se but by virtue of the Good.

The second proof (§ 2), similarly, shows that the existence of an unum
aliquid in diversis is necessary in reference to measure\(^{12}\), as it was before to
goodness.

The third proof (§ 3) considers the pure being: there is an ens\(^{13}\) that is one,
identical, by itself, criterion of the unity and of identity of different and various
events.

The fourth proof (§ 4) starts from the axiological diversity of the many,
that need to be referred to a maximum where plus and minus must be implied as
internal determinations.

\(^{12}\) “Dico autem non magnum spatio, ut est corpus aliquod; sed quod quanto maius tanto
melius est aut dignius, ut est sapientia”: measure is meant not quantitatively but qualitatively.

\(^{13}\) Ens ought to be meant as pure act of being, like St. Thomas ipsum esse subsistens.
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So, as we said, the proofs agree in establishing, as a decisive character of the qualitatively highest Being, the esse per se, as the condition of possibility of the many and different beings:

quod tale est, maximum et optimum est omnium quae sunt.

At § 6, Anselm observes that, in the highest nature, essence (essentia), Being (esse) and being (ens) are in the same relationship than light (lux), to shine (lucre) and what shines (lucens).

The distinction between per se and per aliud is also the key to understand the considerations about creation, developed in the second part of his work: he rejects the opinion of Fredegiso of Tours, who, in De nihilo et tenebris, posed the nothing on the same plane of being, and sustain the possibility to think the nothing only as no-thing, not-being, that is only as determined negation of the preliminary positive notion of Being.

Now, in Proslogion’s Prooemium, Anselm is worn out, by his incapacity of finding an

unum argumentum, quod nullo alio ad se probandum quam se solo indigeret.

The more intense is the effort, the more the solution seems to slip away. At last, just as he, exhausted, is about to give up, all of a sudden his mind gets illuminated: the origin manifests itself only when the pretension of catching and conceiving it is abandoned.

We are already beyond Descartes, because it is not all about finding a God that corresponds to the representation we have of it, but it is about God, who lets the humble and faithful man find Him.

Anselm exhorts to leave behind the occupations, the tumultuous thoughts, the grave preoccupations, the tiring distractions, all things that hamper the

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contemplation and the quietness in God: the mind must be empty, in order to be able to make itself ready for the careful listening of the Word.

*Monologion* was a meditation about rationality of faith, a dialogue of the reason with itself; *Proslogion* is a work of the intellect that, dialoguing with God, aspires to gain His contemplation. The first one is developed on the dimension of *meditatio*; the second one raises itself to the plane of *oratio* and, at least in perspective, to the one of *contemplatio*. The still “too human” desire—if there was any—to “prove God”, becomes here wish to find and love Him. *Proslogion* starts where *Monologion* ended: here we reach God after a dialectical and rational procedure; there, what earlier was the searched becomes the re-searched, though *ab origine* known.

In Anselm, and in medieval theology in general, the relationship between intellect and reason is opposite, compared to the one we give for granted from Descartes on.

In Kant, there is nothing beyond the reason, in order to elaborate the intuition’s matter and to submit it to the supreme unity of thought\(^\text{15}\):

If the intellect is a faculty to give unity to appearances through rules, the reason is then the faculty to give unity to intellect’s rules, on the basis of principles.\(^\text{16}\)

In Hegel, the intellect (*Verstand*) is the power that has aptitude to analysis\(^\text{17}\), while reason (*Vernunft*) is the power that concerns synthesis and gains the universal, recomposing the elements elaborated by the intellect.


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 359.

\(^{17}\) Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1937), 32: “The activity of splitting and separating is the activity and the strength of the intellect”.

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with the word ‘intellect’ was meant man’s possibility to turn intuitively and, somehow, participatively to Being as the fontal light, to the principle of each sight and possibility to see; and it was called ‘reason’ the discursive ability to elaborate conceptual systems inside the interior light.\(^\text{18}\)

Ergo, the intellect is higher than the reason: it is the faculty that tries to reach the One, the *complexio oppositorum*, while reason only works by opposition and never reaches a further result. The dimension, in which the *Proslogion* moves, is that of *intus-legere*. From this viewpoint, *fides quaerens intellectum* does not mean that faith demands the reassuring conclusions of demonstrative reason, but that a faith, already steady because of the evidence of its own object, wants to be completed by the vision, which is, at the highest grade, charity’s adhesion.\(^\text{19}\)

Prayer, in medieval perspective, is not a fall in the irrational, but the landing to the necessary meta-rational dimension.

*Mens* is not the calculating and ratiocinative mind, but the soul disposed to the intellectual intuition—as long as we consider the right meaning of “intellect”—of the Being that constitutes it. There isn’t any gnosis: man can only *aliquoteus intelligere* the divine nature.

At § 2, finally Anselm delivers his intuition:

Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit.
An ergo non est aliqua talis natura, quia ‘dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est deus’? Sed certe ipse idem insipiens, cum audit hoc ipsum quod dico […] intelligit quod audit; et quod intelligit in

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\(^{19}\) See Karl Barth, *Fidens quaerens intellectum* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981).
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intellectu eius est, etiam si non intelligat illud esse. [...] Et certe id quo maius cogitari nequit, non potest esse in solo intellectu. Si enim vel in solo intellectu est, potest cogitari esse et in re, quod maius est\textsuperscript{20}.

The credimus, that holds the first sentence, is faith in what is massaime evident. This is testified by the use of the first plural person: it is not an opinion of mine–seems to say Anselm–but such a clear fact, that can be shared by anybody. Only the ignorant (\textit{insipiens})\textsuperscript{21}, who does not use necessary reasons, can affirm the contrary: he can affirm it, not actually think of it, because the not-being of every being’s fundament cannot be thought.

At § 3, Anselm, after having showed God’s real existence, states also its noetic necessity: inasmuch as it is thought, it must be thought as existent—it cannot be thought as not-existent.

This is not a second proof, since the strength of the argument is in its being \textit{unum}\textsuperscript{22}. It is rather a necessary consequence drawn by the argument, an explication of something implicit there: the \textit{id quo maius cogitari nequit} not only actually exists–because otherwise it would be possible to think of it as existent, that is greater as it is, which is contradictory–but it is moreover

\textsuperscript{20} I don’t think, anybody ever duly recalled the similarity between Anselm’s \textit{argumentum} and this excerpt from Seneca’s \textit{Naturales Quaestiones} (I (V), 13): “Quid est deus? Mens universi. Quid est deus? Quod vides totum et quod non vides totum. Sic deum magnitudo illi sua redditur, \textit{qua nihil maius cogitari potest} [my italics], si solus est omnia, si opus suum et intra et extra tenet”. Obviously, Seneca’s viewpoint leans towards the Stoic one, without nonetheless excluding other possibilities (such as Epicureanism, often considered the opposite of Stoicism. It is absolutely possible, that he met Christian people). But we know for sure that Seneca was one of the main sources of St. Augustine’s, so that his philosophy, with its own basic expressions, could easily become part of Christian linguistic arsenal.

\textsuperscript{21} About the figure of the \textit{insipiens}, see G. d’Onofrio, “Chi è l’\textquoteleft\textit{insipiens}’? L’argomento di Anselmo e la dialettica dell’\textquoteleft Alto Medioevò’, in \textit{Archivio di filosofia} 1-3 (1990).

\textsuperscript{22} In Latin, \textit{unum} means “the one”, “the only one”, not one among other possible ones.
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thinkable *only* as existent—because not being able to be thought of as not-existent is greater than being able to be thought of as not-existent.

The sentence “non est Deus” is nonsense; it can be pronounced, said, not thought. In ignorance’s assertion, there is a gap between *vox* and *res*.

Anselm’s starting point is not apologetic, but rigorously philosophical: I recognize myself as thinking and, *qua talis*, funded in and by a light that makes possible my being and knowing myself as thinking; as a thinker, I know myself as belonging to a source that precedes and funds my essence as a thinker. We call this fundament God. If there were not such a *Principium* as an event in my conscience, there would not be any conscience. But there is the conscience; ergo, the possibility of God’s existence is real and precedes it.

Kant inherits Anselmian arguments from Descartes’ re-elaboration of it23, as he declares when he talks about the “famous ontological demonstration (Cartesian)”24, without ever nominating explicitly Anselm.

He treats the problem—already considered in relation to the fourth antinomy—diffusely in the *Transcendental Dialectic*25. According to Kant, a merely verbal definition of the concept of the absolutely necessary being is very easy: it is something, the not-being of which is impossible. But this does not let us know anything about the conditions, that make necessary to consider the not-being of something as not thinkable. The unconditioned necessity of sentences does not determine an absolute necessity of things.

This critique is close to the one St. Thomas already advanced:

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23 What Descartes talks about in the *Meditationes de prima philosophia* and in the *Discours sur la Méthode* (which is a summary of the Meditations), part IV, is a knowledge of a representative kind, not participative. So, even if the form is similar to Anselm’s one, his observations are animated by a completely different spirit. See E. Scribano, *L’esistenza di Dio. Storia della prova ontologica da Descartes a Kant [God’s existence. History of the ontological proof from Descartes to Kant]* (Bari: Laterza, 1994), 232.


25 See Ibid., Sections III-IV.
Dato etiam quod quilibet intelligat hoc nomine Deus significari hoc quod dicitur, scilicet illud quo maius cogitari non potest; non tamen propter hoc sequitur quod intelligat id quo significatur per nomen, esse in rerum natura; sed in apprehensione intellectus tantum. Nec potest argui quod sit in re, nisi paretur quod sit in re aliquid quo maius cogitari non potest: quod non est datum a ponentibus Deum non esse²⁶.

An identical sentence is contradictory if I deny the predicate and I save the subject. But if they are both denied, there is no contradiction, because there isn’t anymore something that can be contradicted. Saying “God is not”, all predicates are denied together with the subject, so that the sentence is not contradictory, and the related thought is not, consequently, impossible:

You say that there is yet a concept—and precisely just one—the not-being of which, or the negation of its object, is in itself contradictory: and this is the realest concept among beings. This being—you say—has each reality, and you are authorized to admit such a being as possible […] Within the global reality, moreover, is included also the existence […] I answer: you already fell into contradiction, when you introduced in the concept of something […] the concept of its own existence²⁷.

The illusion, therefore, came from an illegitimate metàbasis, “from the exchange of a logical predicate with a real one”, of an analytical predicate with a synthetic one.

²⁶ Sancti Thomae de Aquino, Summa Theologiae (Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Edizioni Paoline, 1988), 12 (I, q. 2, a. 1).
²⁷ Immanuel Kant, op. cit., pp. 624-625.
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As Kant already established in *The one possible argument for a demonstration of God’s existence*, existence is not a real predicate that adds something to the concept expressed by the subject (it is not, in short, a “perfection”. “Being” is simply the position of something or of certain determinations in themselves. From the logical point of view, it is just the copula that binds two concepts, not a further predicate. If I say: “God is”, I do not add anything new to God’s concept, but I just pose the subject, with all its real predicates. Object and subject must have the same content, so that to the concept–which expresses the simple possibility–nothing is added, by the fact that its object is thought as absolutely given: the real does not contain anything else but the simply possible. If it were not like that, it would not exist the thing I thought of in my concept, but something more, so that I could not say that the exact object of my concept exists: the one hundred coins I have in mind correspond to the ones I find in reality; nothing is added to them, by the fact that they actually exist. Through the concept, we do not do anything but thinking of the object in accordance with the universal conditions of the possible experience: our thought receives a possible perception more.

This way, the effort of the “famous ontological demonstration” did not lead to any result, as regards the certification of the existence of a supreme being:

A man, starting from simple ideas, could become rich of knowledge so little as much as a merchant could increase his own patrimony by adding a few zeros to his account.

Already Gaunilo of Marmoutiers, moved by noble intents, replied to Anselm with the famous example of the lost island. Here are his conclusions:

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29 Immanuel Kant, op. cit., 630.
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Si inquam per haec ille mihi velit astruere de insula illa quod vere sit ambigendum ultra non esse: aut iocari illud credam, aut nescio quem stultiorem debeam reputare, utrum me si ei concedam, an illum si se putet aliqua certitudine insulae illius essentiam astruxisse, nisi prius ipsam praestantiam eius solummodo sicut rem vere atque indubie existentem nec ullatenus sicut falsum aut incertum aliquid in intellectu meo esse docuerit30.

But careful: the lost island, like every other particular being, real or fictitious, is not the only id quo maius cogitari nequit; God is not in the mind like all other ideas or representations, but He is there as the principle that structurally and ab origine constitutes the intellect itself.

Anyway, Anselm had already answered ante litteram:

Solus igitur verissime omnium, et ideo maxime omnius habes esse: quia quidquid aliud est non sic vere, et idcirco minus habet esse.31

And for what attains to the passage from the logical plane to the ontological one, it can be considered arbitrary only if Parmenides’ intuition is forgotten: Thought and Being are co-funded in one another, without any division: the Thought expresses the Being that funds it and that in it announces itself.

Bonaventure welcomes with enthusiasm Anselm’s conclusions; he intends just to perfect and deepen them. The means to do that are already contained at the end of Anselm’s De veritate, where he puts in evidence the ontological difference between the eternal Truth and the single true affirmations32: the Truth is not generated by true sentences, but, vice versa, the sentence is true inasmuch as it is adequate to the Truth.

30 Gaunilo’s “Pro insipiente” is included in F. S. Schmidt, op. cit., 125-129.
31 Ibid., 103.
32 See also Monologion, XVIII: “Verum non potest esse sine Veritate”.

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The references to the Anselmian theme are, in Bonaventure, very frequent; but he develops it for the very first time in his Comment to the I Book of Sentences:

Tanta est veritas divini esse, ut non possit cum assensu cogitari non esse nisi propter defectum ex parte intelligentis, qui ignorat, quid sit Deus; ex parte vero intelligibilis non potest esse defectus nee praesentiae nee evidentiae, sive in se, sive in probando.

One thing is to conceive a word; another one is to think with consent, assuming the responsibility of total involvement in what we are thinking.

It is possible to think that something is not in two ways:

Aut in ratione falsi, sicut cogito de hac: homo est asinus; et hoc cogitare nihil aliud est quam quid est, quod dicitur, intelligere. Hoc modo potest cogitari non esse veritas divini esse. Alio modo est cogitare cum assensu, sicut cogito aliquid non esse, et credo non esse.

The thought that something is not can depend on a defect of the intelligent one (ex defectu intelligentis) or on a defect of the intelligible one (ex defectu intelligibilis). The first one is blindness or ignorance (caecitas vel ignorantia): the mind thinks as real, something that has the same nature of what it already acquired; so that, when it ignores something (= it did not previously get it as a datum), it thinks that it is not:

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33 Commentarius in I librum Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi, d. VIII, p. I, a. I (De veritate Dei), q. II (Utrum divinum esse sit adeo verum, quod non potest cogitari non esse), concl. I quote Bonaventure’s works from Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae, Opera omnia edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura ad plurimos codices mss. emendata, anecdotis aucta, prolegomenis schoelis notisque illustrata (Ad Claras Aquas (Quaracchi): Typographia Collegii S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902), 10 voll.
Contingit autem dupliciter esse cogitationem de aliquo ente, videlicet si est et quid est. Intellectus autem noster deficit in cogitatione divinae veritatis quantum ad cognitionem, quid est, tamen non deficit quantum ad cognitionem, si est.

Saying that God, the Truth, is not, we deny what we should affirm. God, as the principle of thinking, is condition of possibility of affirmation and negation, so He cannot be denied together with His own predicates, as Kant says. What I deny is my representation of God, not God Himself.

It is true, that the intellect is lacking, as regards the quid est of the divine truth, but it is equally true that it is not deficient as regards the si est: it cannot understand what is Truth, but, at the same time, it cannot ignore or doubt that it is, because God temperavit the notion in the mind, which means that He put it there in a form compatible with man’s mental capacitas. Intellect, therefore, cannot be unsuitable to cognitio si est Deus: the quaestio utrum Deus sit an non is already decided since the beginning:

Quia ergo intellectus noster nunquam deficit in cognitio Dei, si est, ideo nec potest ignorare, ipsum esse simpliciter, nec cogitari non esse.

The intellect that denies God, in reality, does not think of the God of Scriptures, the highest Truth, the supreme Unity, the sweetest Goodness. It owns a false idea, which can, indeed, be denied, but this would not have any relevance inside a coherent theological enquiry.

Who is lacking of the cognitio quid est, thinks that God is what actually He is not (Deus esse quod non est), an idol, for instance, or he believes that God is not what actually He is (vel non esse quod est), just, for instance (sic ut Deum iustum). Then, since who thinks that God is not what He is, consequently thinks

34 Since God’s presence is a veritas indubitabilis; see Quaestiones disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis, quaestio 1, art. 1.
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that God is not (*ipsum non esse*), so, because of this deficiency of intellect, he concludes that God is not *summa Veritas*, not simply but generally, as who denies that beatitude is in God, denies God Himself.

Enough about intelligent one’s lacking. In another way, it is possible to believe that something is not, because of a defect of the thing itself, or, better, *propter defectum a parte intelligibilis*; and this defect, can be twofold: of presence or of evidence (*aut defectus praesentiae aut defectus evidentiae*). We have the first one, when the intelligible one is not present always, everywhere and totally. But this is not the case of God, because

Deus autem est semper et ubique et totus semper et ubique : ideo non potest cogitari non esse. Hanc rationem assignat Anselmus in libro contra insipientem.

The intelligible one that is not evident can be so *in se* or *in probando*. But *divini esse veritas est evidens et in se et in probando*. In *se*, it is evident because, as the cause of the predicate is included in the subject, so

Deus sive summa veritas est ipsum esse, quo nihil melius cogitari potest: ergo non potest non esse nec cogitari non esse. Praedicatum enim claudetur in subiecto.

On the other hand, God is evident *ex probatione*,

quoniam divinam veritatem esse probat et concludit omnis veritas et natura creat, quia si est ens per partecipationem et ab alio, est ens per essentiam et non ab alio. Probat etiam ipsum et concludit omnis intelligentia recta, quia omni animae eius cognitio est impressa, et omnis cognitio est per ipsum. Probat iterum ipsum et concludit omnis propositio affirmativa; omnis enim talis aliquid ponit; et aliquo posito ponitur verum; et vero posito ponitur veritas, quae est causa omnis veri.
The divine Truth is therefore fount and condition of possibility of every knowledge, of every truth and of every being, as essence of the necessary Being that constitutes and lets subsist each creature. Our thought turns toward the Being, because from Being it comes: God is not a being among the other ones, but He is the one who donates the being, so that He is originally and authentically. Only God properly is; we just have the feature of being; everything comes to existence, called by God who gives it. If we think truly to what we say, we cannot think that He is not: the existence of created truth, testifies the presence of the Truth that lets them be.

If the Truth, as essence of Being, were not, then nothing would be. But if I say: “There is not any truth”, I admit at least this truth, which, again, refers to his transcendental condition:

Concedendum est igitur, quod tanta est veritas divini esse, quod cum assensu non potest cogitari non esse nisi propter ignorantiam cogitantis, qui ignorat, quid est per nomen Dei dicitur.

Here ends our text. Since this thought cannot be deduced from experience, and since, on the other hand, nihil est in intellectu quod prius non fuerit in sensu\textsuperscript{35}, we must conclude that it is inside us \textit{ab origine}: it is the one innate idea that forms the mind and guides it. There is nothing truer than it: it is the truest principle of everything in man. We could not know anything true, if there were not a fundament of truth, a criterion that allows us to recognize\textsuperscript{36} the truth.

Now, Bonaventure concludes, the meta-transcendental condition of our thought cannot be but Anselm’s \textit{id quo maius cogitari nequit}. Anselm already

\textsuperscript{35} Even though Bonaventure can be considered a representative of the Platonic Tradition, he always calls Aristotle “the Philosopher”, with the capital letter, as he calls St. Paul “the Apostle”.

\textsuperscript{36} In the literal meaning of \textit{re-cognoscere}, to know again, to find again in reality what we found already inside us.
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*passim* uses *melius* instead of *maius*\(^{37}\); at any rate, he had clarified in the *Monologion* the qualitative meaning of his idea of measure.

Bonaventure removes every possible residue equivoque, as he talks about *melius* and *verius* instead of *maius*:

> Quod non potest cogitari non esse verius est quam quod potest
cogitari non esse\(^{38}\);

about *intelligere* (*intus-lege*) instead of *cogitari*:

> Simplex esse est simpliciter perfectum esse: ergo est quo nihil
intelligitur melius\(^{39}\).

At the end, the true core of the argument is Parmenides’ intuition: nothing can be denied, unless we start from a preliminary positive element, that funds the possibility of every thought.

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\(^{37}\) Even though Bonaventure can be considered a representative of the Platonic Tradition, he always calls Aristotle “the Philosopher”, with the capital letter, as he calls St. Paul “the Apostle”.

\(^{37}\) In the literal meaning of *re-cognoscere*, to know again, to find again in reality what we found already inside us.

\(^{37}\) See, for instance, F. S. Schmidt, op. cit., 103.

\(^{38}\) *Quaestiones disputatae de Mysterio Trinitatis*, Quaestio I, art. 1.

\(^{39}\) *Collationes in Hexaëmeron sive illuminationes Ecclesiae*, V, 31.