

On the Right and Left Side of *Psalm* 13, 1

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Abstract

This text is intended to eliminate a double difficulty. At least it is what it's intended for. The first one is the left-right distinction from the theological point of view. The second one concerns the *Psalm xiii, 1*. This text tries to see how the argumentation displays. It is structured to answer the both questions and to see if there is a yes or a no when facing the proposed topic.

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Prooemium

Ergo, Domine, qui das fidei intellectum, da mihi ut, quantum scis expedire, intelligam quia es sicut credimus, et hoc es, quod credimus. Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil majus 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, aliquid quo nihil majus cogitari potest, intelligit quod audit, et quod intelligit in intellectu ejus est, etiam si non intelligat illud esse. Aliud enim est rem esse in intellectu, aliud intelligere rem esse.

S. Anselmi, *Proslogion*, caput II

1. *Ambiguitas vs. Obscuritas* (or about how should one carry through dark an extinguished light)

In *De dialectica*, I, 5, 2, Augustine states that *dialectica est bene disputandi scientia*. And then he immediately adds that *disputamus autem verbis*. What he wants to say in his terms is that *verba igitur aut simplicia sunt, aut coniuncta*. And then there are the definitions of simple and complex expressions. I will not insist on that. I move forward to chapter VIII from *De dialectica* which reads: “what prevents the listener from seeing the truth in words is either obscurity, or ambiguity. The difference between the obscure and the ambiguous is that

in the ambiguous [expression] there are several meanings, from which we do not know which one to chose, while in the obscure one nothing appears or very little from what we expect, actually appears. Where little of it [the expected meaning] appears, obscurity is similar to ambiguity” (Augustine 1991, 89). Then a comparison appears in Augustine’s work, after which he says that there are three types of obscurity:

- “when something reveals itself to the sense [of vision], but remains hidden for the spirit” (Augustine gives the following example: someone sees a painted pomegranate, but he has not even seen or heard about pomegranate; well, obscurity does not come from one’s look/sight, but from the spirit);

- “when the object reveals itself to the spirit if it is not hidden to the sense” [of vision], - as the face of a painted man in the dark;

- we have the third type of obscurity when something is hidden to the sense [to vision, for instance] and even if it is revealed it would not gain anything in clarity for spirit. Augustine gives the instance for us imagine of an uninitiated person faced with the situation of recognizing the painted pomegranate in the dark. The bishop concludes that it is obvious for this type of obscurity to be the most obscure of all.

Really *fond* of Cicero, Augustine knows the place from *Brutus*, XLI, 152; here it is explained how something obscure can be elucidated through interpretation as one has to recognize and then differentiate the ambiguities – *obscurum explanare interpretando, ambigua primum videre, deinde distinguere* (Munteanu 1991, 201, note 94).

I would like to apply the situation presented in this introduction to two testamentary places: the left-right distinction and *Psalm* 13, 1. I cannot even realize how to interpret the part from *Ars poetica*, 25 where Horatio says: *brevis esse laboro, obscurus fio* (I try to be brief, but become obscure).

2. *Bonus scholasticus, malus politicus* (or about left and right)

The world is used to working with dichotomies and this may be because the nature of thinking is divided and multiple.

Thinking is applied to nature and thus it becomes a gift made to it. Thinking tells us that a thing cannot exist unless it has an opposite and this is applied only to created things. By virtue of creation, we usually believe that opposites such as the following are in succession: white-black, right-wrong, beautiful-ugly, left-right and so on. It is in the nature of man (especially of the Christian) to associate unfaithfulness to left and faith to right.

Let us see whether there is something obscure in this paragraph or not. Everything seems to start from an evangelical episode. The synoptic gospels (*Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*) present the episode considered, i.e. the two robbers crucified together with Jesus. *Matthew* tells us: “At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and the other one on the left” (27, 38; see also *Isaiah* 53, 12). The passers-by, the bishops, the scholars and the elders insulted Him, and so did the robbers crucified with Him (*Matthew* 27, 39-44). *Mark* tells us the same thing (15, 27) and adds that it seems that only the passers-by and the bishops insulted Him, but not the scholars and the elders (15, 29-32). In the synoptic gospels, right after the chapter and the pericope that presents the crucifixion, there are those which talk about the insults addressed to Jesus. Who were those that insulted Him? The passers-by, the foremost priests, the scholars and the elders, the soldiers (as *Luke* alone adds) and the robbers (in *Matthew* and *Mark*). Only in *Luke* the following chapter appears: “One of the crucified robbers was insulting Him: “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other answered admonishing him: “Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? We have been, indeed, condemned justly for our crimes, but he has done nothing wrong”. Then he said: “Jesus, remember me when you shall be in your Kingdom”. Jesus replied to him: “Indeed I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (*Luke* 23, 39-43); Maxim the Confessor, in *Ambigua*, 55, arguing against Gregory the Theologian, gives the following explanation to the sentence: “You shall be crucified with a criminal”. He says: “maybe he will cease slandering the Word by means of his behavior, moved by that who quarrels him, as it happened on the cross to the robber who had shamelessly blasphemed. For the silence that

does not respond to that who admonishes is sign of receiving the spoken word” (Saint Maxim the Confessor 2006, 169). Here is the first inhabitant of Heaven presented as a robber, but *Luke* does not tell us whether that who spoke in favour of Christ was on the “right” or “left” of the Savior. *John* is even more elliptic: he mentions the robbers (19, 18), but says nothing about their words, but about something else (19, 31-33).

This is the situation presented in the Gospels. Let us descend in the time of sacred history and follow the entirely obscure rapport “left”-“right” in exemplary places.

It begins in *Genesis* (13, 5-13) with a fight. It is about Abraham and Lot. When guarding their cattle, they start a fight and Abraham asks Lot for them not to fight any more because they are brothers. The patriarch tells him: “It is better to separate yourself from me; if you go to the left, I go to the right” (13, 9). And Lot will go to the left (which does not make him an atheist in any way!) and he will live “in the cities of the Plain, and move his tents as far as Sodom” (*Genesis*, 13, 12). A simple exercise of biblical geography shows us that Abraham, who remained in Canaan, is on the right and Lot goes to the South end of the Dead Sea below the desert of Judah, where Sodom seems to have been located. And we know what happens to Lot (*Genesis* 19, 30-38)!

I will draw attention on a few other places related to the “left”-“right” rapport in the sacred history so as to show that the emphasis falls on the “right”:

- “Your *right* hand, Lord, is known for its strength” (*Exodus* 15, 6);

- “when He is on my *right*, I will not be shaken” (*Psalms* 16, 8);

- “it was not their arm that saved them, but Your *right*” (*Psalms* 44, 3);

- “I will uphold you with my righteous *right* hand” (*Isaiah* 41, 10);

- “If your *right* hand will cause you to sin, cut it off” (*Matthew* 5, 30).

I would also like to mention *Mark* 16, 19; *John* 21, 6; *Acts* 2, 33; *Romans* 8, 34; *Ephesians* 1, 20, and this is only a selection!

I will also insist on two pericopes from *Matthew*. The first is about the request made by the mother of Zebedee's sons (20, 20-22): "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him together with her sons and kneeled down to make Him a request. He asks her: "What is it you want?" She answers: "Command that in Your Kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and the other one on Your left". Jesus said: "You do not know what you are asking." And they did not know!

Further in the text, in the chapter about the future judgment (*Matthew* 25, 31-46), it is shown how Jesus will separate the nations; He will do it like the shepherd who separates sheep from goat – "and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on the left" (*Matthew* 25, 33). To those on the right He will say: "Come, you who are blessed by My Father to inherit the Kingdom prepared for you" (*Matthew* 25, 34). He will say something to those on the left as well: "Depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire" (*Matthew* 25, 41).

As for the thief on the right, the good thief, he is the last man Jesus converted while He was still using the body of flesh. An apocryphal text (*Nicodemus' Gospel*, "Prologue", X, 2) retains the name of the thief¹.

In book IV of *De fide orthodoxa* (cap. 12), John of Damascus speaks about the reasons of praying towards East. Damascus says that neither by accident nor without reason do we choose to pray towards East. Any reasons why? We pray to God in a double way according to our double structure: the seen/sensitive part and the unseen/spiritual. We give Christ the East for praying. Driven out of Eden, which was located to the East, Adam lives in the West, with East on his right; Moses' tent had the altar screen towards East and Judah's more honest tribe was in the same Eastern area. Crucified, Jesus was looking to the West and when Rising, He went towards East. The lightning is visible from East and so it shall be the coming of the Son (*Matthew* 24, 27; *Luke* 17, 24). If we wait for Jesus, we cannot pray to the West. As a position, in the Scripture, to look right means to look from the defender and the place of the defender is the place of God. The sinners go to the left, and the right has an active meaning, being the symbol of stability and

authority (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 1994, 464-8; Cocagnac 1997, 92; 231).

The 12th century – which by means of Anselm, develops the art of philosophy – *intelligentia spiritualis*, begins in a festive atmosphere as it reconnects earth to sky and finds its characterization in universality. At the level of ideas, the 12th century is creative, and passionate in what the implication of the person is concerned. Shortly, it aims at restoring the Scripture to the Scripture. At this moment one of Anselm's most obscure references, i.e. *insipiens* slips.

3. *Insiemens et persona, seu de numero stultorum*

I chose to take over the (inverted) title of the third subchapter in chapter three of Alexander Baumgarten's paper (Baumgarten 2003, 88-91). I think that the obscure context of *insipiens* may balance the Anselmian interpretations.

I would like to develop this issue of the patristic and medieval exegesis on *Psalms* 13, 1 (52, 1) starting from the fact that the authors of those times have a spontaneous, intuitive relation with the sacred text. Here the following situation intervenes: on the one hand, Anselm's relations with the biblical exegesis of his time are not so exposed and the Anselm's work is less suited for such approaches, on the other hand; moreover Anselm is too generous in methodological remarks when it comes to the interpretation of the Scripture. There is another aspect at stake: at the end of the 11th century, biblical exegesis had not gone through the renewal that, several decades later, will cause the enrichment and diversification of such type of exegesis – the biblical one. However, a very serious exegetic tradition exists, whether I mention Origen, Augustine, Isidore of Seville or Raban Maur here. As a typical Anselmian attitude, it must be pointed out that the Archbishop of Canterbury rarely and less explicitly resorts to something like that even if his resources are so often the patristic ones. Here a typical Anselmian *topos* interferes: *Anselm takes over the sacred texts in their simplest meaning*; he does not try to clarify any quotation (pericope) consulting the authorities, although he undoubtedly knew the comments made by such authors.

The obscure place of the text that I will further debate on is related to one of the most famous quotations by Anselm. Besides, it is where the proof from *Proslogion* is established (chapter II): *dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus* (*Psalm* 13, 1/52, 1). Gilbert Dahan makes the following comment: the exam of the patristic and medieval tradition shows us that the affirmation of the “unwise” (*insipiens*) is most often understood in a relative (restrictive) meaning and leads us to wondering why Anselm has not taken back these interpretations and given an absolute meaning to the affirmation of the “unwise”? Then, we must see if the way in which Anselm uses *Psalm* 13, 1 has any influence on the exegesis itself (Dahan 1991, 12).

Allow me to return to the text in question: *dixit insipiens in corde suo: Non est Deus*. The term *insipiens* is obscure enough. The ways in which the term *insipiens* appears in local translations from The Scripture or in Anselm are: “the crazy”, “the ignorant”, “the cracked”, “the unwise”. I will try to follow them as much as possible.

The Hebrew term that *insipiens* stands for is *nabal*. Only “the aggressive unfaithful” is called *nabal* (as in *1 Samuel* 25, 25; *Psalm* 13, 1/ 52, 1; *Isaiah* 36, 5-6), as well as “stubborn madness” of “the mocking” (*Proverbs* 1, 22; 14, 6; 24, 9). In the Old Testament madness is:

- “pure nonsense” (*Proverbs* 10, 14; 14, 15; 18, 13);
- “guilty foolishness”, i.e. the disregard of truth and God’s discipline (*Proverbs* 1, 7).

The untried man, the one who can be easily fooled, is not just “mindless” (*Proverbs* 7, 7), he is also crazy, thinks in a crazy manner so he does not only have to make a mental effort, but also a moral, spiritual choice. Besides the first two situations that I mentioned, *nabal* allows interchangeable words.

In the New Testament we have two terms for “crazy”: the former is *aphron* (with a prefix of deprivation which could mean: “lack of feelings” – with the meaning of losing a status and the latter, *aphron* stands for the one who lost reason or judgment. The second meaning also corresponds to the “angry” or “crazy” [with anger], as well as to the “cracked”, “unwise”, “insane”) and the latter, *moros*. In *Mark* 5, 22 Christ warns that labeling someone as *moros* gives a spiritual and moral connota-

tion to the act of choice. Paul uses the word *moros* (*1 Corinthians* 1, 25, 27), when taking into consideration the unfaithful ones who have wrongly assessed the plans of God. In *Luke* 11, 40 the meaning of “crazy” (*aphron*) refers to the incapacity of a man to feel things exactly the way they are. Another meaning of “craziness” in the New Testament is that of “unprofitable choice” (*Luke* 12, 20; *Romans* 1, 21).

Especially in the New Testament, “craziness” must be connected with unfaithfulness (rebellion, disobedience) and the terms from *LXX* are: *apistia* (a state of mind denoting lack of trust) and *apeitheia* (rebellion as such for the Christian sin is not ignorance, as for the Greeks, but disobedience). Therefore, the practical expression for unfaithfulness is disobedience (*Hebrew* 3, 12).

According to the *Biblical Dictionary* (798, 884, 889, 899-900), in *1 Samuel* 25, 1-36, *nabal* is a name, and this Nabal is harsh on David (as a coincidence, *Psalms* 13, 1/52, 1 are David’s).

As we have seen, *Vulgata* uses the term *insipiens*. The preposition *in* with accusative (not with ablative) means “against” among other things (as in *impetus in hostem*), and *sipiens* has its roots in *sapio, ere*².

To sum up, there are at least four types of interpretation for *insipiens* (Dahan 1991, 11-25).

3.1. Historical Interpretation

The first one would be historical interpretation represented by the Antiochians, especially Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodore of Cyr. The two see in *insipiens* the Assyrian king Sanherib or an Assyrian official named Rabšache sent by Sanherib to ask Hezekiah to hand over Jerusalem. Theodore of Cyr says that the beginning of psalm 13 agrees on the words of Sanherib and Rabšache, who prevent Hezekiah in a speech that questions divine omnipotence (*Isaiah* 36, 18-20).

The interpretation of a comment attributed to Bede the Venerable is also historical; it is in fact a comment from 1150 in which the presumed Bede seems to be indebted to Jerome. The comment reads as follows: *Haec Ezechias contra Rabsachen loquitur*.

We find this type of interpretation again later, in the 13th century, in Nicholas of Lyre³. Nicholas of Lyre will “challenge” in part the historical interpretation of *insipiens* to join an older “literal” interpretation. It is about the “literalism” of the Jewish commentator Salomon bar Isaac (better known as Rashi, 1040-1150), rabbi in his hometown, Troyes and considered to be the greatest authority from in the time of Talmud. According to Nicholas of Lyre, *Rabi Salomon exponit hunc psalmum de Nabuchodonosor, qui blasphemavit Deum Israel verba et facto*. Rashi notes the presence of two similar texts in Psalter and says that *Psalm* 13/14 is related to Nabuchodonosor, while *Psalm* 52/53 must be related to Titus Flavius Vespasianus who conquered Jerusalem on August 70 A.D. In the end, the Jewish commentators are not unanimous here. Gilbert Dahan recalls at least three points of view:

a. The *Midrash Tehlim* comment, as late as the 13th century (Dahan 1991, note 12, p.13), identifies *insipiens* with Esau (and Esau himself symbolizes those who were not chosen by God) or the “nations” that destroyed the Temple. As for *Psalm* 52/53, this comment interprets the term *nabal* as a name;

b. In his own comment, David Qimhi (1160-1235) says that *insipiens* stand for all “nations” that persecute Israel thinking in their hearts that there is neither God nor any other judge in this world that would make them pay for their deeds;

c. Finally, Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1164) sees the lost scholar in *insipiens*⁴.

To the literary comment made by Nicholas of Lyre, a moral one is added where *insipiens* is the one who persists in evil (*obstinato in malis*); this *obstinato* acts as if God did not see him and were not be able to punish him.

We find two similar points of view (in-between and not in agreement with the ones above) in Hugues de Saint-Cher and Ludolphe the Monk. In the line of a moral interpretation of *Psalm* 13, the former sees the “sinner” in *insipiens*, i.e. not having the true wisdom (*vocat peccatorem insipientem, quia veram sapientiam non habet*); the latter states: *Propheta loquitur de quolibet peccatore obstinato in malis suis*, and

peccatore obstinato in malis suis are the Jews and pagans (Dahan 1991, 14, notes 18 and 20).

3.2. Interpretation as an Anti-Semitic Polemic

The second type of interpretation (shared by most medieval commentators) sees in *insipiens* the Jew who refuses to recognize the divinity of Christ, hence the anti-Semitic polemic of the medieval exegesis against *Psalm* 13⁵. Here the following issue arises: where does the anti-Semitic interpretation of *Psalm* 13 come from since nothing seems to justify this interpretation in the text itself? The Hebrew *nabal* is translated by *stultus* (and it appears six times), *insipiens* (six times again), *fatuus* (once) and *ignavus* (once) in *Vulgata* (Dahan 1991, note 27, p. 15)⁶. We must not overlook that the Fathers, be they Greek or Latin, do not all comment in an anti-Semitic manner *Psalm* 13. On the one hand, a particular case among the Greek Fathers is Origen and not with respect to *Psalm* 13, 1, but to *Psalm* 52, 1, where he makes an allusion to “the thoughtless nation that denies Christ’s divinity”; but Origen does not refer to the Hebrew people here. In one of the homilies, when Origen sends directly to *Psalm* 13, 1, the king of Egypt is mentioned. Origen comments: “The devil, that fool who said within his heart could be seen in this king: ‘It is not God’” (Origen 1981, 60).

On the other hand, Jerome is satisfied to note that the Hebrew *nabal* is the correspondent for *insipiens*⁷. In the Latin environment, Augustine gives the following explanation in *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: the term *imprudens* sends to “pagans” (“nations”), while the expression *filios hominis* (*Psalm* 13, 2) assigns the Jews, and among them (according to the comments of Cassiodorus, Peter the Lombard, Gilbertus Porretanus, Petrus Cantor), Augustine considers the Jews to stand before Christ, first of all patriarchs.

An anti-Semitic shade also appears in Arnobius to whom the assimilation of *insipiens* with the Jews seems obvious, if not even implicit⁸.

With Cassiodorus, the medieval exegesis of *Psalm* 13 is being influenced in an anti-Semitic manner so the phrase *Non est Deus* is understood as a negation of Christ's divinity⁹.

Starting from a claim of Pseudo-Albert the Great (a Pauline observation, in fact) that distinguishes between true wisdom and *sapientia vana* (Pseudo-Albert concludes that the Jews were deprived of both), the commentators, starting from the 13th century launch themselves into a discourse on wisdom seen as *distinctio*. Consequently, the expression – *in corde suo* bears two types of remarks:

a. like Cassiodorus, some commentators notice that *insipiens* makes his situation worse by not being satisfied with a simple oral statement, and then he says that God does not exist “within his heart”;

b. others say that *insipiens* only “imagines” what he says without having a scriptural evidence (Dahan 1991, 18).

3.3. *Interpretation as Polemic Against Pagans (Nations)*

A third interpretation of *insipiens* in the patristic and medieval exegesis links *insipiens* to “pagans” (“nations”). The idea dates back from Augustine's time, appears at Augustine, and the tendency was that of making the following distribution:

- *Psalm* 13: *insipiens* = the Jew;

- *Psalm* 52: *insipiens* = the pagan.

It is true that this identity moved from one psalm to another is rather pointed out at than exploited, because the “pagan” relating to *insipiens* is still a more ambiguous character than the “Jew” (Dahan 1991, 19-20)¹⁰.

Then, Petrus Cantor associates the pagan to the Epicures without specifically naming them. Only Nicholas from Amiens identifies the pagan doctrine with Epicurus' doctrine¹¹.

3.4. *Coming Back to the Second Interpretation*

Finally, most of the patristic and medieval interpretations take into consideration the denial made by the *insipiens* regarding God's existence (*Psalm* 13), and *insipiens* would be the Jew. A problem is however at stake here and it is a funda-

mental one: it is not about denying (through *insipiens* = Jew) God; it is about rejecting Christ's divinity (one can see that this forth interpretation is improperly named like this. In fact, the second type of interpretation is enlarged here). The issue is that those that were unfaithful were not charged as atheists, so that things get complicated in a logical scale: since Christ is God and Jews do not believe in Jesus, as a consequence they do not believe in God, either. In other words, if *insipiens* (the Jew) despises Christ, then he also denies God. The phrases become:

- Jews deny the fact that Him, Christ, is God;
- Jews do not deny God in any way.

Gilbert Dahan concludes (Dahan 1991, 21-2) that the key for the problem could be Anselm and his *Proslogion*! Namely, it is no longer about (through relativism and the moral interpretation) a real negation of God, but a special kind of including divinity in a bracket which allows to react "as if" God were not "there" to judge our actions. In other words, Sanherib and Nabucodonosor do not deny divinity in any way, since they themselves worship their own Gods. What they deny is the fact that the God of Israel is the true God almighty (Dahan 1991, 21, note 75). The problem is one of the 13th century: if the existence of God is an innate knowledge, does it need to be proved in any way? According to Gilbert Dahan, three texts come to our help (Dahan 1991, 22)¹². Shortly, we must exclude the possibility of denying God, since the words spoken by *insipiens* must not be taken ad litteram, meaning that it is better to understand *simpliciter* in that particular verse. As a whole, the difficulties regarding the complete denial of God in Middle Ages are emphasized by the commentators (in fact, by the end of 12th century, such a hypothesis was unimaginable, while starting with the 13th century, the assumption of the absence of God was already made).

What is sure is that the 13th century rarely quotes the Anselmian argument, and when it does, it sees it as a proof of God's existence (and the place where the 13th century commentators are claiming it is located in the *Prooemium: quia Deus vere est, et quia est summum bonum*). Gilbert Dahan seems to straighten things up: from the moment *Proslogion* is known (including the defense of *insipiens* made by Gaunilon), the

Anselmian booklet causes a sort of revolution on a capital theme from philosophy and theology (Dahan 1991, 25). On Dahan's line, I conclude: in everything Anselm does, we find a break from the exegetic tradition; neither does Anselm despise this tradition, nor does he ignore it; we must take into account Anselm's use of the Scriptural texts in their most common, that is not obscure interpretation (Dahan 1991, 25, note 95).

4. *Vade retro, insipiente*

In *Philippicae sive In Marcum Antonium* (11, 2, 1), Cicero says that any man makes mistakes, but no one, except the unwise (*insipientis*), perseveres in the mistake (*nullius, nisi insipientis, in errore perseverare*). Let me make a transfer. The *Book of Wisdom* from the Old Testament, which is also a small theological treatise, a catechetical writing, states in 13, 1 (very significant, and I find it to be just a coincidence!): "For all men were by nature foolish, in whom there is not the knowledge of God and who neither from the good things seen did not succeed in knowing Him who is, nor from studying His works could they discern the artisan". The conclusion of the *Book of Wisdom* (13, 1-9) is that "nature itself leads us to recognize the living God" (Fereț 1997, 13).

According to reverend professor Eduard Fereț, *Psalm* 13, 1 is "positive disbelief, free, willing denial of God", "guilty, responsible ignorance, which is manifested through hardness of heart and dullness of mind caused by a bad behavior" (Fereț 1997, 14). Ergo: "idolatry is wandering and foolishness, but the negation of God is something even more serious, i.e. madness" (Fereț 1997, 15)¹³.

The fundamental issue from which I started and aim at getting to is mainly the following: the real meaning of Anselm's proof is, in fact, a negative one. Namely: it is impossible for thought to say that God does not exist under the pretext that it (thought) thinks that He (God) does not exist. If Anselm's proof lends itself to critical error (and it definitely lends itself to this), then this error lies in seeing the deduction of being from a content of thought in the evidence concerned¹⁴. I believe that Evdokimov well asserts that "Saint Anselm never thought of

such a thing. It is about the intuition that seizes the impossibility to think of certain contents as a pure content of conscience” (Evdokimov 1993, 38)¹⁵, which is already a phenomenological issue. Fortunately, I stick to Evdokimov’s assertion and reiterate the issue above through him. It is a Pauline aspect at stake, and “Saint Paul knew well what he was doing when he focused his sermon on what immediately aroused the violent reaction of speculative logic”. What do I mean? It is simple: “Incarnation will always be insanity and madness for the human mind... The man Jesus could have lived in Palestine as well; not his worship by the disciples, but *God’s humanization* is unacceptable” (Evdokimov 1993, 16). Here Evdokimov summarizes things in an outstanding manner: “The man who states that he is God is unbearable for Jews, the God who became man is madness for the Greek; the Old Testament knows God, but cannot accept a God who suffers; the Greek mysteries knew the image of a suffering God, but they did not know God. The New Testament discovers both of them”, and it discovers them as not being absent and not being several (Evdokimov 1993, 16, note 1). This is what Anselm wants and that is why *insipiens* does not bother him. For Anselm, *insipiens* is the one that substantially makes the great service. Karl Barth reiterates an aspect that, if not understood, crumbles Anselm’s evidence: the purpose of evidence is not that of proving God’s existence only through rational processes (it is not at all something like that). The evidence seeks something else: to prove that I, a rational being, cannot rationally deny God after knowing who He is.

Karl Barth thinks that Anselm makes a distinction between *idea* and *what the idea represents*. What the crazy man denies is not the idea in itself; the crazy man denies what the idea represents. *Idea* refers here to God as essence and existence; *what the idea represents* is the existence as God’s presence and power in the world.

5. On Anselmian Theonomy

If I “believe so that I understand”, and I do not, first of all, “understand so that I can believe”, it means that I *partici-*

pate to an experience. *Insipiens* and the “faithful” report are different before the Anselmian evidence:

- *insipiens* through *auditus rei*: if the argument has no meaning, it is because I cannot judge a thing just by saying it;
- the *faithful* through *scientia experientis* that allows him to really know that “something” which he speaks about and to judge it, especially since this “beyond” thought is exactly the “nerve” of the Anselmian evidence.

In Chevalier’s opinion, God is revealed by eluding Himself: *De se per seipsum probat* (Chevalier 1956, 202). This opinion is also shared by Paul Vignaux according to which Anselm, in *De veritate*, defines truth as rectitude: language adapts itself to thought, thought to thing (Vignaux 1987, 89). According to Vignaux, the one who proves himself proves from himself, and the labor from *Proslogion* consists of converting the Augustinian feeling of absolute divine greatness in some kind of dialectical principle. Such dialectics hides a dispute and the Scripture finds Anselm’s adversary to be the *unwise*. He denies a God of faith (not the one of the philosophers) and is established in a character that Anselm does not address directly, yet he cannot avoid. *Proslogion* actually argues against *insipiens*, even if the treatise was intended for the monks.

Let us see what Paul Tillich understands by experience. According to Tillich *experience* consists of participating to an objective of present truth (in the Scripture) and commented by the Fathers in their authority (Tillich 1970, 182). Such an experience can become knowledge, but this fact is not compulsory since faith does not depend on knowledge in any way, yet knowledge, of any kind, is indebted to faith. By a comparison of which Tillich makes use of, natural sciences assume that I participate to nature, but my participation in nature does not necessarily end in science (be it that of nature). Paul Tillich states here something extremely interesting, namely that Anselm is a “speculative” scholar in a time in which this term still meant the analysis of fundamental structures of reality¹⁶. Tillich is Hegelian, although against Hegel, when he says that if it is founded on experience, it is impossible for knowledge not to reach the system. Despite most positivists, a feature of medieval thought can be identified here: medieval philosophers

know that, in order to get to a consistent thinking, they must think systematically. Moreover, the term “system” indicates the ordering of the cognitive experience so that the different contents of experience are not contradictory with one another (the end has to cover a whole truth, a new Hegelian affinity that Tillich undertakes). Only in this way reason can express in a manner that is not irrational, any kind of religious experience. Theological reason does is not any different here, with its function and purpose, from mathematical reason. They both make the religious or mathematical experiences, intelligible as they order them¹⁷.

This whole process is called “dialectical monotheism” by Tillich and in this type of monotheism God Himself is in motion/liveliness. This kind of God is a *vivant* one and in Him, we have a *yes* and a *no* to say at a time so that, following Augustine, Anselm agrees that God is not identical with Himself in the way that inert objects are identical with themselves. God is a separation and a liveliness/*vivant* reunion, from which a fundamental fact rises: thus things considered, then the autonomy of reason is not cancelled by mystery¹⁸. Tillich calls *theonomism* this attitude of Anselm and places him between Augustine and Hegel from the point of view of theonomy (and when he chooses Hegel, Tillich hesitates, knowing well that he would disagree with him, i.e. with Hegel, although Hegel agreed with Anselm). In any case, according to Tillich, theonomy as a method consists of recognizing the mystery of being, and not believing that this mystery is a transcendent and authoritarian element imposed to our will and which would destroy reason from the perspective of its generic use, as the unwise believes. Where does Tillich separate himself from Hegel and sticks to Anselm? In the same dialectical reasoning, the one uniting them cannot avoid separating them. Thus clearly stated, the dialectical reasoning is opaque to the Incarnation of the Word. At the same time, incarnation is dialectical, mysterious and paradoxical. For reason in its dialectical use, it seems already too much (Kierkegaard will not have a different opinion, even if he cannot stand Hegel). Anselm sees things differently: it is about the plan of existence (which is available for Hegel, too), and this plan must be connected with God’s free-

dom (and here is the “separation” from Hegel), man’s freedom, the sin and the pardon (the circle, so to say, closes here but not by force as in the case of Hegel, but in the way of Methodius of Olympus and Augustine, as they shown in their *De libero arbitrio*). At this point, reason (the Hegelian one, means Tillich) can still accept, but no longer understand. The sphere of existence (hence the separation from Hegel), i.e. reason as such, is governed by the decisions of will and not the necessity of reason in itself.

Tillich agrees with the following: Anselm’s theonomic thinking takes place in the arguments for the existence of God. Tillich names them “the so called arguments in favour of what Anselm agrees to call the existence of God” (Tillich 1970, 184-5) because the arguments, not the “existence” of God want to prove it. Anselm’s arguments (from *Monologion* and *Proslogion*) are foreign to such purpose.

Let us take an example, namely the cosmological argument (I generally call it like this since the arguments in *Monologion* are subsuming, all three of them, to the cosmological manner of argumentation). According to Tillich, the cosmological argument belongs rather to the philosophy of religion, because we deal with an existential analysis of finiteness, and only thus considered this analysis is fair and useful. However, concludes Tillich, this idea is combined with a metaphysical realism which assimilates the universals of the degrees of being so that the cosmological argument builds some sort of hierarchy of concepts inside which the absolute being and absolute good are not just ontological qualities, but also ontological realities; in this case the supreme being is the one who has the maximum of universality. Therefore, the ontological argument is fair to the extent that it analyzes the way in which man observes reality: reality is finite and it implies the infinite. The argument is still debatable to the extent that we expect from it a demonstration so as to conclude that the existence of a supreme being is a certainty. It is not casual the fact that Anselm himself, in *Proslogion*, reproaches to this argument that it starts from what is relative so that it can make the relative the basis of absolute. Anselm’s “self criticism” is not fair in what the second part of the argument is concerned, as opposed to its first

part (where he analyzes the infinite inside the finite). Anselm wants more; he wants a direct argument and one that does not need to start from the world to reach God. He wants to find God in thought itself so that, before leaving from itself to head for the world, thought has to be sure of God. That is why I say that Anselm's thinking is "theonomical" in Tillich's terms. Theonomy is a thinking which willingly gives up its autonomy and accepts the fact that the human spirit rebounds to its divine foundation. Anselm concludes: "and this is You, Lord our God" (*Proslogion*, 3), and Tillich says: "This is what I call theonomy" (Tillich 1970, 186)¹⁹.

To draw a conclusion on Anselmian theonomy, I state that it is in the way it responds to its critics; what follows is that Anselm's reasoning is not an argument in favor of the existence of God, but an analysis of human thinking. This analysis comes back to saying: we must have a meeting point between the absolute necessity of thought and that of being; if things are not in this way, we cannot have any kind of certainty and then the unwise is right. But Anselm knows well that "the cautious man hides his knowledge, and the heart of the mindless shows up front its stupidity" (*cor insipientium provocat stultitiam – Proverbs* 12, 23).

6. From Anselm to Thomas

Saint Thomas sends to the psalm of the unwise twice. He does it in *Summa theologiae* (I, q. 2, a. 1) and in the exposure to psalms (*In psalmos Davidis expositio*).

In *Summa theologiae*, q. 2 from the first part, Thomas handles the problem of the existence of God and psalm 52, 1 (not 13, 1) is quoted in the beginning sequence: if God exists, is He known through Himself? *In extenso*, it sounds like this: *sed contra, nullus potest cogitare oppositum eius quod est per se notum ut patet per philosophum, in IV Metaphys. et I Poster., circa prima demonstrationis principia. Cogitari autem potest oppositum eius quod est Deum esse, secundum illud Psalmi LII, dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus. Ergo Deum esse non est per se notum.* I translate and complete the Aristotelian assertions: it cannot be thought something contrary to a thing

known through itself, as the Philosopher states in *Metaphysics*, IV, 3, 3 and in *Analitica Posteriora*, I, 10 to prove the first principles. This means that no one can think the contrary of the fact that God exists, as the psalmist says (52, 1): *dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus*. Therefore, the existence of God is not known through itself. Then Thomas continues by saying that a thing can be known through itself in two ways: one through itself but not for us, other through itself but for us. In what follows, Thomas is Kantian and frankly speaking, Kant is Thomist when making the difference between the analytical and synthetic sentences on the line of the established relations between the parts of the sentence. In article 2, he wonders if God's existence can be proved so he can end article 3 where he answers the question: does God really exist?, and offers the five ways. This is all subject of *Summa theologiae*.

How does Thomas comment on *Psalm* 13? Let us see. He says that the psalmist condemns the enemies' insanity and brings out their wickedness. As an adjacent sub-theme, the psalmist focuses on two things: the enemies' intrigue and the hope of liberation. The intrigue is stipulated at first, and then authenticated. Pride is the beginning of sin and the beginning of pride already forms the denial of God. Therefore, wickedness starts when man no longer cares for God and for this reason, Thomas comments read as follows: *dixit insipiens in corde suo, non est Deus*. However, is it possible for such a thing to be said? *Dicere in corde est cogitare. Sed numquid potest cogitare Deum non esse? Anselmus dicit, quod nullus potest. Item Damascenus. Cognitio Dei naturaliter omnibus est inserta; naturaliter cognitio nullus potest cogitare non esse*. Namely, to talk to the heart means to think. And yet, is it possible for someone to say that God does not exist? Anselm, as well as John of Damascus, says that no one is capable of such thing. The concept of God is naturally given to all humans. Therefore, what is naturally given cannot be denied in the light of its existence. Thomas shades: however, despite the argument *ad gentium* doubled by the innate one, we shall speak of the concept of God in two ways: one related to Himself, the other related to us. If we rationalize the concept of God in the first way, there is no doubt that it cannot be conceived as nonexistent since no sentence whose

predicate is included in its definition can be conceived as false by its own nature. However, it is necessary to remember the fact that in the case of God, existence belongs to a different category because God's being is simultaneous in its substance. *Ergo*: anyone who speaks about God in relation to God Himself speaks about God's being. That is why God cannot be conceived as nonexistent when related to Himself. According to Thomas, this is how John of Damascus thinks. The natural given is indeterminately, acategorically known, therefore God exists despite the unwise (even though, once again, the unwise does not question the existence of God). But what God actually is as such is not related to the given (innate) natural, because God is, first of all, a given of the faith. Can anyone state that God does not exist when He believes that He is not almighty or interested in human actions: *quis es omnipotens ut serviamus ei?* (*Job* 21, 15).

According to Thomas, this aspect can be translated to the Jews who claim that Jesus is man and not God: *potest referri ad Judaeos dicentes Christum hominem purum esse, non Deum. [...] Qui Judaei, non credentes ipsum qui promissus erat in lege, dicunt, non est Deus, iste scilicet qui nobis praedicat. Et hoc dixit, insipiens, quia Dei sapientiam recipere noluerunt oculos mentis excaecatos.* And Thomas quotes from *John* 10, 33, *Psalm* 81, 5 and *Book of Wisdom* 2, 21. Thomas concludes: maybe the sinner is criticized here – first the *sin* (which is in his heart – *in corde suo*), then his sinner acts (and which are *corrupt*) and, finally, his sinner habits (and they are abominable). The sinner is crazy, unwise, since he does not have the wisdom or access to what is spiritual (*1 Corinthians* 2, 14). If he has no principle, the unwise cannot avoid committing errors. The corrupted body is due to the removal of the natural principle by external principles. The natural principle of the soul is the love for God. When external love (concupiscence, lust) or other sins overcome the love of God, then this love is actually eliminated. Not by chance after it is said *non est Deus*, the following words are added: they are corrupt. *Jeremiah* 5, 12 says: *negaverunt Deum, et dixerunt, non est ipse* and the *Ecclesiast* 21, 17 says: *cor fatui, scilicet peccatoris* and Thomas adds: *quasi vas confractum* (“the heart of the crazy one, called sinner, is like

a broken vessel”). Hardly obscure is for Thomas the fact that sinners are corrupted by their evil actions (*corrupti ergo sunt, peccatores per malum actum*), and *John* 3, 19 considers that the sinner’s actions are bad because the sinners have willingly moved away from good and, consequently, their natural capacities have been corrupted. As long as the love for God dwells in man’s soul, man is liked by God. The crazy gives himself to the service of the idol and ends up as ugly as the one he loves (*Hosea* 9, 10).

7. On the Left to the Right

“A brother asked Abba Pimen about his thought of anger. And the old man told him: this thing is like a man who has fire on his left and a glass of water on his right; so if the fire starts, he will take the water from the glass and put it off. Fire is like the seed of the enemy and water means throwing oneself before God” (Patericul 1997, 185).

NOTES

¹ Giovanni Papini states, in *Life of Christ*, that the Church received him among its saints, on the ground of that promise of Christ, as Dismas (Papini 1991, 324-6). Canonical gospels do not give the names of the two robbers. Their names appear in *Nicodemos’ Gospel* and in *The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour*, XXIII, where it is also proved why a robber had been saved and the other not. In the last mentioned Gospel, the good thief is called Titus and the bad one – Damachus. The cult of the good thief will be widely spread from East and up to the other cardinal point (*Apocryphal Gospels* 1999, 111, 125, 190, 213-4, 218).

² I try to make a correlation here between *sapiens*, *sapientis* which means “wise” and “capable”. I associate wisdom to the Greek *theōria*, and capability to the Greek *téchnē*. I take into consideration the fact that, through the aforementioned correlation, i.e. virtue (*areté*) is a wonderfully distributed binary: it is for the body (to have *areté* in your feet, as Achilles, according to Homer), as well as for the soul (wisdom, courage, temperance). However, *insipiens* originates in “not knowing to reckon”, and thus “reckless”.

³ The period between the 13th and 15th century is characterized by an exegetic enthusiasm in the medieval university environment, especially in Paris. This type of libertine exegesis is not appreciated in the centers of study of monastic orders, especially by the Dominicans (Hugues de Saint-Cher, Thomas of Aquinas) and the Franciscans (William Middletown and Nicholas of Lyre).

⁴ It must be noticed that these exegeses did not even have a slight influence on the Christian commentators, not to mention Nicholas of Lyre. Through a series of retorts, Nicholas of Lyre will be rejected from the point of view of the literalism practiced by Paul de Burgos (a converted Jew) who, in his turn, will be challenged by Matthias of Thuringia.

⁵ Petrus Cantor (the Teacher) wrote: *Dixit insipientis iudaeus in corde suo: hic homo, scilicet Christus, non est Deus, quia non credebat eum esse Deum.*

⁶ We find out from this note the correspondence of terms in the Hebrew text in *Vulgata*. *Stultus* appears in *Deuteronomy* 32, 6; 32, 21; *Job* 30, 8; *Proverbs* 17, 7; 30, 22; *Isaiah* 32, 6. *Insipiens* can be found in *Psalms* 13, 1 (52, 1); 39, 9; 74, 18; 74, 22; *Isaiah* 32, 5; *Jeremiah* 17, 11. *Fatuus* appears in *Proverbs* 17, 21, and *ignavus* in *2 Samuel* 3, 33.

⁷ *insipiens in hebraeo Nabal positum est* (Dahan 1991, 16, note 31).

⁸ The arrival of God demanded in *Psalms* 12, is realized in *Psalms* 13, but the unfaithful nation (called *observantes sabbata*) states in its heart: it is not God (Dahan 1991, 16, note 35).

⁹ It will also be said that only through “antonomasia” *insipiens*, the Jews are appointed (Dahan 1991, 17, note 44), and antonomasia, as figure of speech, consists of using a name instead of a common name or a common name (or a periphrasis) instead of a name.

¹⁰ The pagan has a corrupted mind and makes gods from a piece of wood (Bruno of Würzburg). Pseudo-Albert characterizes the negation of God as a mental confusion of the pagan, since the pagan states that God is what God is not and mistakes what is God for what it is not.

¹¹ *Iste gentilis fuit Epicurus* (Dahan 1991, 20, note 69).

¹² It is about:

- “the words of the unwise” (*Psalms* 13) which seem to show that ignoring God is no big deal;
- A text from John of Damascus (*De fide orthodoxa*, I, 1);
- Chapter II from *Proslogion*.

¹³ *Vulgata* calls the *Book of Wisdom – Liber Sapientiae*, while *LXX* calls it *Solomon’s Wisdom* (and in 13, 1-9 we recognize a polemic against idolatry).

¹⁴ Kant criticizes Anselm’s proof from the point of view of the theoretical use of rationality and he is right. For Kant, the existence derived from concept is an illusion and the process is illicitly set by the philosopher behind the word *ontotheology*. This takes into consideration the purely notional seeing of God, it namely aims at deriving the existence of the first being from simple concepts, without the help of experience (Kant 1969, 499).

¹⁵ And when I said that it is a phenomenological issue, I did not take into account the *description*, but the *intention (intentio)*.

¹⁶ I wrote speculative between quotation marks because the term carries in itself a pejorative shade from the point of view of a defaced positivism. A simple etymological exercise proves the contrary.

¹⁷ This is how Anselm also proceeds when affirming that Trinity, for example, can be understood by means of mediating the rational factor, and falls in the line with Augustine.

¹⁸ This fact does not either make Anselm a supporter of the autonomy of reason in a formal sense, nor a heteronomous like those who subsume their reason to a tradition that they do not understand (Tillich 1970, 183).

¹⁹ As I have already said, in the theological fact, thought cancels the fact of being autonomous by abandonment and rebounds itself to its divine foundation. The ontological evidence is deducted by Tillich in four sequences:

- a. even the unwise understands the signification of the name “God”. He understands that, since we turned to the word “God”, we think of the Absolute;
- b. if the unwise understands that “God” nominates Absolute, it is because the idea of Absolute is present in the human spirit;
- c. therefore there is a superior form of being and it consists of not just being in the intellect, but also in reality;
- d. because it is better to be, at the same time, in the intellect and outside it than just be in the intellect, this form of existence, this kind of *being* will be attributed to the Absolute itself in an absolute manner (Tillich 1970, 187).

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