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WAS ANSELM A REALIST? THE *MONOLOGIUM*¹

In his book *The Logic of St. Anselm*,² D. P. Henry calls into question the traditional view that Anselm is a realist. Henry gives three, not obviously equivalent explanations of what a "crude" or "primitive" realist is. According to the first (pp. 96, 98), the realist thinks that general terms such as 'man' have meaning in the same way that proper names do: by standing for or referring to some entity. But where proper names stand for or refer to particular entities, general terms stand for or refer to universal entities—which the realist takes to be *mind-independent*. According to the second (pp. 99–107), a realist is someone who believes universal entities or classes are or exist in the same sense that Socrates and Plato are or exist. As a third criterion of the realist position (p. 107), Henry suggests the claim that universal entities are connumerable with particular entities. Henry argues that in *De Grammatico* Anselm was trying, despite the hinderance of ordinary Latin, to distinguish two senses of 'is' or 'exists': a "ground-level" 'is' in which particulars like Socrates and Plato are said to exist; and a "higher level" 'is' in which universal substances are said to exist. Using this distinction, Henry tries to explain away apparent evidence in *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi* that Anselm was a realist.

It is not my purpose in this paper to dispute what Henry says about Anselm's views in *De Grammatico*, or for that matter in *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*. But, in my opinion, Henry gives the evidence in the *Monologium* short shrift. Recognizing that "a better case for Anselm's realism might be based on the proof of the existence of God given in the *Monologium*," Henry says that "such a case is inconclusive" because "other writers who cannot be described as 'realists' in the full sense have been prepared to use such a proof in

¹ I am indebted to my husband, Robert Merrihew Adams, for helpful comments on this paper. The translations are my own.

² *The Logic of Saint Anselm*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1967. Page references are to that work.

their natural theology" (p. 99). But after elaborating the distinction between the ground-level and higher level 'is', Henry never returns to the text of the *Monologium* to see whether the distinction fits what Anselm says there. In what follows, I shall do just that and argue that Anselm cannot have had this distinction in mind when he wrote the *Monologium*.

I

Before examining the *Monologium* itself, we need to have before us a more detailed account of the distinction Henry attributes to Anselm between the ground-level '...is...' and what Henry labels '...is*...'. In his books and articles, Henry draws on Leśniewski's Ontology and spells out his points in terms of the formal language of that system. For our purposes, however, it will suffice to consider the more nearly "Englished" versions of his analyses.

To begin with, lower case letters such as 'a' and 'b' range over proper and concrete common nouns ('Socrates', 'Plato', 'man', 'animal') and concrete adjectives used as substantives ('album', 'bonum', etc. which would often be translated into English as 'white thing', 'good thing'). The the ground-level '...is...' takes such names and name-like expressions as completions.

(.1) ³ a is b.

is a statement involving the ground-level '...is...' that is true if either 'a' and 'b' name the same individual and only that individual (e.g., 'Cicero is Tully') or 'a' names one of the things named by 'b' (e.g., 'Socrates is a man').

Weak Identity is defined as follows.

(.3) For all a and b, a is weakly identical with b, if and only if for all c, c is a if and only if c is b.

That is, a and b are weakly identical, if the extension of 'a' is identical with the extension of 'b'.

Greek letter such as 'Φ' and 'Ψ' range over predicate or predicate expressions, according to Henry. In two places (p. 102 and p. 103) he says predicate expressions are "verbs or verb-like expressions which require one name-completion in order to form a sentence." But the the sentences in Anselm which he interprets as involving the higher-level '...is*...' of which predicate expressions are the legiti-

mate completions, seldom are explicitly of this form. Rather predicate expressions seem to include abstract nouns like 'humanity' and 'literacy' as well as concrete common nouns and adjectives (capitalized and italicized like 'Man' and 'White') where it is clear that they are doing duty for the corresponding abstract noun. Henry then defines the higher-level '...is*...' as follows.

(.4) For all Φ and Ψ, Φ is* Ψ, if and only if for some a, Φ of a and Ψ of a, and for all b, Φ of b if and only if a is weakly identical with b.

To say Φ is* Ψ, is to say that there is (ground level) at least one thing named by 'a' such that it satisfies Φ and Ψ, and all the things that satisfy Φ satisfy Ψ. For example, the statement 'Honesty is* a virtue' means that there is (ground-level) at least one thing that satisfies Honesty (i.e., has honesty or is honest) and that satisfies Virtue (i.e., has virtue or is virtuous). Henry emphasizes that '...is*...' is a "completely unproblematic but higher type of '...is...'" (p. 103) — unproblematic in the sense that to say Φ is* Ψ does not posit any universal entities Φ and Ψ on the ground level.

Finally, Henry contrasts 'There exists (ground-level) exactly one a' which is analysed as

(.5) For all a, there exists exactly one a, if and only if for some b, a is b.

with 'There exists* exactly one Φ' which is analysed as

(.6) For all Φ, there exists* exactly one Φ, if and only if for some Ψ, Φ is* Ψ.

Referring to (.4), we see that to say that there exists* exactly one Honesty, is to say that there is some predicate expression 'Ψ' and some name-like expression 'a', such that there is (ground level) at least one thing named by 'a' that satisfies Honesty and satisfies Ψ, and all the things that satisfy Honesty satisfy Ψ. Since Ψ is unspecified, this comes to little more than saying that at least one thing that exists on the ground-level is (ground-level) honest. Thus, to say that there exists* exactly one Honesty, obviously does not posit any universal entity Honesty on the ground-level either.

Henry notes (p. 101) Anselm's distinction of what is signified by 'white' *per se* and what is signified by 'white' *per aliud* and identifies the former with the meaning (evidently, the sense) and the latter with the reference. What is signified by 'white' *per se* is the same for each standard use of the term 'white', but the intended reference,

³ To avoid confusion, I will use Henry's numbering for these analyses.

what is signified *per aliud*, is not. Presumably, too, it is only what is signified *per aliud* that is on the ground-level. What is signified *per se* is*.

II

In the *Monologium*, c.i, Anselm argues that there is a being that is supremely good. In c.ii, he indicates that the same form of argument shows that there is a being that is supremely great. In c.iii, he uses a slightly more complicated version of the same argument to show that there is a nature that exists *per se* and is that through which all things exist. Since the issue we are interested in will be the same for each argument, let us concentrate on the argument in c.i. It may be set out as follows.

1. All the things that are said to be something *F* in such a way that by mutual comparison they are said to be *F* more or less or equally, are said to be it through something *F*-ness which is not one thing in one case and another in another.
2. We learn by our senses and reasoning faculty that there are diverse and innumerable goods which if compared would prove equally or unequally good.
3. Therefore, there is some one thing through which all goods are good. (1,2)
4. The thing through which all *F*'s are *F* is a great *F*.
5. Therefore, the thing through which all *F*'s are *F* is *F per se*. (4, analytic)
6. Therefore, the thing through which all goods are good is Good *per se*. (3, substitution in 5)
7. It is better to be *F per se* than to be *F per aliud*.
8. Therefore, there is something Good *per se*, which is supremely good.

Suppose we try to interpret this argument on the assumption that Anselm did distinguish between ground-level '...is...' and '...is*...' in the *Monologium* and so avoided realism (in the second sense) even in his earliest work. To do so, we shall have to construe the first three steps as follows.

- 1'. All the things that are said to be (ground-level) *F* in greater, lesser, or equal degree, are said to be (ground-level) *F* through something which is* the same in diverse things.

- 2'. We learn by our senses and reasoning faculty that there are (ground-level) diverse and innumerable goods which if compared would prove equally or unequally good.
- 3'. Therefore, there is* some one thing through which all goods are (ground-level) good.

(1') can be construed as a material mode version of the claim that in every standard use of the term 'good', no matter what the intended reference is, the sense is the same. (3') asserts that the one significatum that is common to all these standard uses of the term 'good' is*. But what does this assertion

There is* exactly one Goodness.

come to? To see, we must first apply Henry's (.6) to get

For some Ψ , Goodness is* Ψ .

But applying (.4) we get

For some Ψ , for some *a* Goodness of *a* and Ψ of *a* and for all *b*, Goodness of *b* if and only if *a* is weakly identical with *b*.

This asserts that there is at least one individual on the ground level that satisfies Goodness and Ψ and that all the individuals that satisfy Goodness satisfy Ψ . As we saw above, this comes to little more than saying that at least one individual that exists on the ground level has goodness or is good – which is no more than what is asserted by (2'). (3') certainly does not assert the existence on the ground level of some universal entity Goodness.

The interpretation of (4) is problematic, if we understand '*F*' to range over name-like expressions capable of completing the ground-level '...is...' For suppose we understand the 'is' to be the ground-level 'is'. The '*F*-ness is a great *F*' is not a well-formed formula. For '*F*-ness' is not a legitimate completion of the ground-level '...is...' On the other hand, if we understand it to be '...is*...' it is still not a well-formed formula, since '*F*' so understood, is not a legitimate completion of the schema '...is*...'. The only way to render (4) as a well-formed formula is to ignore the qualification 'great' and take '*F*' in (4) to range over concrete common nouns or adjectives *taken as equivalent to their corresponding abstract nouns*. That is, we must understand '*F*' as equivalent to '*F*-ness'. Then (4) becomes

(4') *F*-ness is* *F*-ness.

Applying (.4) to (4') we get

For some *a*, *F*-ness of *a* and *F*-ness of *a*, and for all *b*, *F*-ness of *b* if and only if *a* is weakly identical with *b*.

The latter says only that at least one individual on the ground-level satisfies *F*-ness — that is, has *F*-ness or is *F*.

(5) becomes

(5') The thing through which all *F*'s are (ground-level) *F*, is* *F per se*.

That is, that through which all *F*'s are *F* is what is signified *per se* by the term '*F*'. Thus,

(6') The thing through which all goods are (ground-level) good, is* Good *per se*.

So far as I can see, this interpretation wrecks the rest of the argument. For applying this distinction to the argument, (7) asserts that what is *F per se* — i.e., the sense of the term '*F*' — is better than that which is *F per aliud* — i.e., the reference of the term '*F*'. The latter claim does not make sense, since what is *F per se* is not good at the same level as what is *F per aliud* and thus cannot be compared in this way with what is *F per aliud*. If Anselm had been systematically distinguishing ground-level '*...is...*' from '*...is*...*' in the *Monologium*, he would not have advanced (6)–(8) as sound.

The main difficulty in trying to apply Henry's distinction to this argument, however, centers around (3'). Did Anselm really take himself to be proving that there is* some one thing through which all goods are good?

At first glance, Anselm's discussion in *Monologium*, c.xxvii, suggests that he did. Anselm has identified things whose existence he has proved in cc.i,ii, and iii, with each other and with the supreme nature. In c.xxvii, Anselm says that the supreme nature is neither a secondary substance since it is not a universal that is shared by many individuals, nor a primary substance since it is not an individual that has a universal essence in common with others. The latter denial that the supreme nature is a primary substance might be taken as a denial that the supreme nature is on the ground level. But by the same reasoning, one could take the denial that the supreme nature is a secondary substance as a denial that the supreme nature is*. So this passage does not really give evidence that Anselm wanted to establish that that through which all good things are good, is*. ⁴

⁴ It is not clear that this passage can be reconciled with the rest of what Anselm says. If, as Anselm says, the Ideas by virtue of which changing things have the natures and properties they have, exist in and are identical with the mind of the supreme nature, it would seem that in some sense the supreme na-

Further, when we examine what else Anselm says about the supreme nature in the *Monologium*, it is clear that he did not intend to be proving in step (3) that the Goodness through which all things are good is*. To begin with, in cc.iv–viii, Anselm argues that the supreme nature created all things other than itself out of nothing, where the supreme nature is that whose existence is proved when the existence of Goodness is proved in c.i. But, as we have seen above, if (3) is understood as (3'), it asserts merely that at least one good thing exists on the ground level — which is no more than is asserted by (2'). It says nothing about anything that could be the cause of the existence of all those good things mentioned by (2'), let alone about anything that could create them out of nothing. Further, in c.xv, where Anselm is trying to establish what the essential properties of the supreme nature are, he makes it perfectly plain that he thinks the supreme nature could exist even if nothing else existed.

Thus, this expression — that the supreme nature is the highest of all things or that it is greater than all the things that have been made by it, or any other similarly relative expression — which can be said of it, does not designate its natural essence. For if none of those things in relation to which it is said to be highest or greater, ever existed, it would be understood to be neither highest nor greater. Nevertheless, it would not therefore be less good and it would in no way suffer detriment to its essential greatness.

This clearly implies that Anselm thinks he has proved in cc.i,ii, and iii, the existence of something that would exist even if none of the things mentioned in (2') existed, and would be both good and great. But (3') does not assert the existence of anything not already mentioned in (2'), let alone the existence of something that would exist and be good and great even if nothing else existed. And in fact, if Anselm had not thought that the supreme nature would exist even if nothing else existed, he would not have been willing to conclude in c.lxxix that the supreme nature is worthy of worship and ought to be called "God."

ture is a universal essence shared by many. The contrast between the two senses of 'substance' here is Aristotle's, however. And it may be that Anselm has in mind the "Aristotelian" secondary substances that are in sensibles but not separable from them. Anselm would emphatically deny that the supreme nature *inheres* in many. Instead, he seems to understand the Platonic relation of participation between changing things and Ideas, not in terms of inherence of the Idea in the changing things, but in terms of imperfect resemblance.

Moreover, in cc.xv-xvi, Anselm argues that the supreme nature is all those things it is universally, better to be than not to be — viz., living, wise, powerful, true, just, blessed, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible — *per se*. If (3') says that what is the supreme nature is*, then we must understand the statements in cc.xv-xvi to assert that the supreme nature is* living, wise, powerful, true, just, blessed, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible *per se*. What would such a statement mean? Since '*F per se*' is equivalent to '*F-ness*', let us substitute 'Life' for 'living *per se*', 'Wisdom' for 'wise *per se*', 'Powerfulness' for 'powerful *per se*'. Since the supreme nature is identified with the Goodness proved in c.i, let us ask what the statement 'Goodness is* Life, Wisdom, and Powerfulness' means. Applying (.4), we get

For some *a*, Goodness of *a* and Life of *a* and Wisdom of *a* and Powerfulness of *a*, and for all *b*, Goodness of *b* if and only if *a* is weakly identical with *b*.

But this means that there is on the ground level at least one good thing that is also living, wise, and powerful, and that all the good things are (ground level) living, wise, and powerful. But Anselm would have regarded the second half of this statement as false. The discussion in c.xv makes it clear that he thinks non-living things are good. For he says that to be gold is better than to be lead. Gold could not be *better* than lead if it were not *good* in some degree. Since only living things can be wise, it is obvious that Anselm would not say that all good things are wise either. Similarly, if a gold ring is good, it is obvious that a thing does not have to be powerful in order to be good, on Anselm's view. Thus, it seems entirely unreasonable to take Anselm as saying in cc.xv-xvi that the supreme nature is* living, wise, powerful, true, just, blessed, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible *per se*.⁵

The most natural way to understand the argument in *Monologium*, c. i, is to understand it as offered by someone who does not draw the distinction Henry suggests but who would say that there

⁵ Surprisingly, this is one of the passages of the *Monologium* that Henry focuses on in demonstrating Anselm's logical subtlety as opposed to the alleged simple-minded approach of Ockham who "unceasingly strives to make technical language pointless." (p. 26) In sections 2.22-2.24, Henry fixes on a passage in *Summa Logicae* I.7 where Ockham says that he will tolerate imprecise talk of Socrates *having* his humanity (whereas, for Ockham, strictly speaking Socrates

is a single sense of 'is' in which it is true to say both that Socrates and Plato are and are good and that Goodness is and is good. If we interpret all the occurrences of 'is' univocally, (1) is readily recognizable as the premiss cited in *Parmenides* 132A1-B2 as a reason for believing in the existence of Platonic Ideas. Step (4) is the familiar Self-Predication assumption. The inference of (5) from (4) is the familiar Self-Predication assumption. The inference of (5) from (4) is understood this way: If *F-ness* is that through which *all* things are *F* and is itself one of the *F*'s, then it must be *F* through *F-ness*, too — i.e., it must be *F per se*. It is evident that *F-ness* is regarded as connumerable with *F*'s in this reasoning. The rationale behind (7) can be understood in terms of the claim that what is causally independent is better than what is causally dependent (whether material, efficient, formal, or final causes are at stake).

It seems, then, that we can make the best sense of Anselm's argument in the *Monologium*, c. i (and thus of the arguments in cc.ii and iii), if we suppose that he did not distinguish ground-level '...is...' from '...is*...' in that work and that he did regard what is *F per se* as connumerable with particular entities we observe by the senses and reason — that is, if we suppose that he was a realist in the second and third of Henry's senses. Even so Anselm would not be a realist in the first sense mentioned by Henry, according to which a realist says that universals are mind-independent. For Anselm does not wish to conclude that the Platonic Ideas exist mind-independently. If he did, the arguments in cc.i and ii would not serve his ultimate purpose, which is to prove the existence of God. Instead, Anselm assumes that no Idea could exist independently of a mind. Given this assumption, proof of the existence of Goodness *per se* and Greatness *per se*, provide premisses for inferring the existence of a mind whose Ideas they are. And, in cc.ix-xii, xxix-xxxvi, Anselm argues that all the Ideas exist in the mind of the supreme nature and, since this nature is simple, are identical with it.

Of course, nothing I have said touches Henry's case that Anselm was not a realist by the time he wrote *De Grammatico* and *Epistola*

(is his humanity) in the same way that Anselm in *Monologium* c. 16 proposes to tolerate talk of God's *having* justice (whereas strictly God *is* justice). Ockham is surely misinterpreting if he thinks Anselm would go along with his own view that strictly speaking Socrates is his humanity. But equally, my arguments show that Henry is mistaken if he thinks that in this passage Anselm has the distinction between ground-level "...is..." and "is*..." in mind.

De Incarnatione Verbi. The *Monologium* was Anselm's first work. Henry might point out that in the Preface to the *Proslogion* Anselm confides that

After I edited, at the request of certain brothers, a little work [the *Monologium*], as an example of meditation of the grounds of faith... I began to ask myself if perhaps one argument could be found which would require for its proof nothing other than itself alone, and which alone would suffice to demonstrate that God truly exists, and that there is a supreme good that lacks nothing and on which all things depend for their existence and well being...

The outcome of this inquiry of Anselm's was, of course, the argument in *Proslogion*, c. 2. Henry might point out that once Anselm had developed this argument, he had no more need to rely on the more cumbersome arguments of the *Monologium* for proving the existence of God. It is true, as recent discussion has pointed out,⁶ that the argument in *Proslogion*, c. 2, does not require the realism of the *Monologium* for its soundness. On the other hand, Anselm continues in the *Proslogion* (e.g., cc. xv and xviii) to predicate abstract nouns such as 'Wisdom' and 'Life' of 'God'. And it would make no more sense to render those statements as the claim that God is* Wisdom and Life, than it did to interpret the statements of *Monologium*, c. xv-xvi, that way. Whether Anselm was a realist when he wrote the *Proslogion*, and if so, what sort of realist he was, is a topic for further investigation.

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⁶ In a paper by Robert Merrihew Adams, "The Logical Structure of Anselm's Arguments," in the *Philosophical Review*, January, 1971.