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ANSELM'S PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Introduction

ANSELM makes full use of the stock-in-trade of all philosophers: he identifies ambiguities and he distinguishes various senses of words; he sometimes appeals to and sometimes rejects ordinary usage; he insists, often dogmatically, that some expressions are proper and others improper, and tries to legislate usage; he coins new words; he complains about how grammar and grammatical form can be misleading. No special theory of language need be behind such activities.[1] Yet Anselm did have a general semantic theory that not only licensed these activities but also enabled him to address particular questions in the philosophy of language—how words are linked to the world, whether meaningful language has to be denotative, what makes true statements true, and the like. His philosophical dialogue *De grammatico* is entirely devoted to the philosophy of language, as are parts of *De veritate* and his *Philosophical Fragments*. Even the *Monologion* contains extensive discussion of semantic issues. Anselm says virtually nothing about formal logic, but he takes up issues in the philosophy of language in nearly everything he wrote.

This chapter proceeds as follows: §1 gives an overview of Anselm's account of signification, which is the foundation of his semantics; §2 looks at the semantics of names (or more precisely referring expressions) and at Anselm's distinction between signification and appellation, as well as at the different kinds of signification; §3 examines verbs and their peculiar semantic features; §4 covers statements and their truth.[2]

[1] Likewise, these activities do not entail that Anselm had in mind a distinction between technical and nontechnical uses of language, much less that he was committed to the former. Desmond Paul Henry has argued that Anselm was in fact so committed, and that in his philosophical works he was trying to create a technical logical vocabulary that could be part of a system of formal logic, struggling against the confines of ordinary Latin usage. See Henry [1964], Henry [1967], and Henry [1974]. But for skepticism about Henry's thesis, see Adams [2000] and Marenbon [2002].

[2] In what follows, citations to texts of Anselm refer by volume and page number to F. S. Schmitt, *Anselmi opera omnia* (cited in the Bibliography at the end of this volume). The exception to this rule is for references to the *Philosophical Fragments*, for which page numbers are given to Schmitt [1936]. All translations from Anselm are my own.

1. The Theory of Signification

Anselm subscribes to the Augustinian view of language as a system of *signs*.[3] This general category covers linguistic items, such as utterances, inscriptions, gestures, and at least some acts of thought; it also covers non-linguistic items, such as icons, statues, smoke (a sign of fire), and even human actions, which Anselm says are signs that the agent thinks the action should be done (*De ver.* 9; S I: 189). There is no limit in principle to the sort of object that can be a sign. What makes an object a sign is that it has 'signification': on the one hand, it has the semantic relation of *signifying*, which is what a sign does and roughly approximates our notion of meaning; on the other hand, it has a *significate*, which is the item or items signified by the sign.[4] Therefore, a sign signifies its significate. The name 'Socrates' is a sign, for example, since it signifies—is the name of—its bearer, the concrete individual Socrates, who is thereby its significate. Anselm recognizes three types of signs: (*a*) sensible signs, that is, signs that can be perceived by the senses, including spoken and written words; (*b*) the mental conception of such sensible signs, for instance when I imagine the shapes of the letters that make up an inscription or the sounds of an utterance; (*c*) non-sensible signs, such as the concepts and mental images by which I think of things directly (*Mon.* 10; S I: 24–25).[5] Anselm clearly thinks that (*a*) and (*c*) count as languages, and he treats them as such; he explicitly calls the linguistic elements of each 'words' no matter whether they are spoken, written, or thought (*ibidem*). They differ in that spoken and written languages have conventional elements, whereas 'mental language' is a non-conventional and purely natural language. The details of Anselm's account of the semantic relation of 'signifying' differ depending on what kind of language is in question.

For spoken and written language, and indeed sensible signs generally, Anselm adopts the traditional account of signifying: a sign signifies something if it gives rise to an understanding of that thing.[6] Hence signifying

[3] See especially Augustine's *De magistro* and *De doctrina christiana*.

[4] Anselm regularly calls the significate of a sign its signification (*significatio*), an unfortunate habit since the term is ambiguous between (*a*) the property possessed by the sign in virtue of its activity of signifying, and (*b*) the significate of the sign. Anselm's intent is usually clear from context, and I will silently disambiguate his usage when it is called for.

[5] Anselm is clearly following Aristotle in *De interpretatione* 1 16^a3–8 for (*a*) and (*c*), but his addition of (*b*) is original. Gaunilon also mentions something like (*b*) in *Pro insip.* 4, to dismiss it in favor of (*c*) as the usual case (S I: 127).

[6] The traditional account is derived from the passage from Aristotle referred to in the

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is initially a causal relation, since the tokening of a sensible sign brings about an understanding of something. Anselm recognizes two difficulties with the traditional account. First, it seems not to be able to distinguish signifying from mere psychological association. Anselm declares that we can distinguish them, though he does not say how.[7] Second, it does not specify whether we are interested in the speaker or the hearer, in the writer or the reader. Anselm suggests that we can distinguish 'words' according to the people who have them (*Mon.* 62; S I: 72), and the obvious generalization of this reply is to say that there is no fact of the matter: the speaker and the hearer may take the same utterance to have different meanings, that is, associate it with different concepts, and this is quite different from it not having any meaning at all. But it is open to Anselm to say that since he is concerned with a conventional causal link, what matters is what understanding the tokening of a given sign usually brings about; this will be its core meaning, the root of ordinary usage.

For mental language, Anselm has to modify the traditional account of signifying, since the tokening of an element of mental language does not give rise to an understanding—rather, it *is* an (act of) understanding. He does so in the obvious way, taking an understanding to signify that of which it is an understanding. For conventional (spoken and written) languages, signifying is a matter of causing a concept, which is then naturally tied to something; for mental language, the semantic relation of signifying can simply be identified with the intentionality of the relevant mental act. Hence conventional languages are parasitic on the natural and universal language of thought; Anselm tells us that "all other words were devised on account of these natural [mental] words" (*Mon.* 10; S I: 25). Mental language functions as the semantics for spoken and written language. But to explain the

preceding note, supplemented with his remark in *De interpretatione* 3 16^b20–22 that "he who speaks gives rise to an understanding"—understood as translated into Latin, and commented on, by Boethius (See Kretzmann [1975] for the importance of this proviso). The relation was expressed with several verbs: *constituere*, *generare*, *manifestare*, *exprimere*. Somewhat surprisingly, Anselm refers to the traditional account only a few times: *De gramm.* 11 (S I: 160); *De casu Diab.* 11 (S I: 249) by implication; and *Phil. Frag.* 43 when correctly distinguishing *constituere intellectum* from *constituere aliquid in intellectu* (a distinction that sometimes got away from him). Yet there is no question about his adoption of it; his writings are shot through with the assumption that spoken and written words get their meaning from the concepts with which they are associated.

[7] See *De gramm.* 14 (S I: 160): "Even if body or surface should come to mind [on hearing 'white'], which happens because I'm accustomed to whiteness being in them, the name 'white' doesn't signify either of them."

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semantics of mental language, Anselm has to explain how an understanding of something is of that thing rather than another. He distinguishes two ways in which we think about things: (*a*) through mental images, especially fitting when the thing in question is a physical object; (*b*) through a 'rational conception',[8] such as when we think of humans as rational mortal animals.[9] In both cases, Anselm says that the thought of something is 'like' the thing of which it is the thought, and indeed that such a thought is a 'likeness' (*similitudo*) of that thing. He declares that "all the words by which we 'say' any given things in the mind, *i. e.* think them, are likenesses and images (*similitudines et imagines*) of the things of which they are the words" (*Mon.* 31; S I: 48). This claim is plausible for (*a*), but seems not to work well for (*b*). The definition or formula of something need not be 'like' that thing in any way, other than being the definition of it; to insist that it is only detracts from the intuitive plausibility of thinking that mental images *are* 'like' that of which they are the images.

Anselm's way out of this difficulty is as follows. He takes the analysis of the mental 'word' in thinking to carry over to the case of the Divine Word, through which all things are created, which in no way uses mere likenesses. To (*a*) and (*b*) Anselm thus adds (*c*): thinking of something by grasping its very essence.[10] Hence (*a*)–(*c*) should be understood as describing a range of increasingly adequate ways of thinking about something. Now (*c*) is clearly beyond human reach. And Anselm, like Augustine, maintains that (*b*) is very nearly out of human reach as well. As a matter of psychological fact, Anselm holds, human beings have a hard time thinking without recourse to mental images, even when they are inappropriate (as when we try to think about incorporeal things). Hence most or all human thought is contaminated with imagination. It is tempting to think that Anselm therefore holds that all thought resembles its object because it involves mental images. But the temptation has to be resisted. On the one hand, it would leave us with no way of understanding (*c*), or even reasonably pure instances of (*b*), and an explanation of intentionality that does not apply to these cases is unacceptable. On the other hand, richly detailed mental images resemble their

[8] That is, *rationis intellectu*, a formula Anselm takes to be parallel to *per rationem* (*Mon.* 10 ; S I: 25). In translation the phrase 'rational conception' splits the difference between the senses 'definition' and '(the faculty of) reason'.

[9] *Mon.* 10 (S I: 25). He also mentions (*a*) and (*b*) as alternative ways of thinking about things in *Mon.* 33 (S I: 52).

[10] This is the burden of *Mon.* 31 (S I: 49–50). Anselm develops the systematic parallel between human thinking/saying and the Divine Word from *Mon.* 10 onwards, as a *leitmotif* of his whole work.

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subjects more than less detailed images, all the way up to nearly image-free definitions, but Anselm holds that the latter are more accurate (hence more 'like') their subjects than the former. This last point gives us the clue to Anselm's way out. He is clear that (*a*) and (*b*) are not the things about which we think, but are merely the means by which we think of them. We do not typically think of mental images any more than we do the shape of letters or the sound of syllables rather than the words they make up, or, for that matter, think of definitions as such rather than the natures they capture. Instead, thinking of something is a matter of having that very thing in mind—Anselm encourages us to speak of the thing as 'existing in the understanding'—and hence is nonrepresentational.[11] Yet to get something into the mind, that is, to think of it at all, we use a variety of more or less accurate means, ranging from mental images to rational conceptions. Hence likeness is a matter of accuracy, not pictorial resemblance, in the means we use to conceive of something. Mental intentionality is recast as the real presence of the object in the understanding.

Thus Anselm's general semantic theory is an account of signs, and how they signify their significates by (literally) bringing them to mind. The philosophy of mind that underwrites his account of mental language is not without problems, of course, but we can set them aside to focus on issues directly relevant to the philosophy of language. Now Anselm follows Aristotle's lead in the *De interpretatione*, recognizing three basic categories of language: the name (*nomen*), which covers common nouns, proper names, noun-phrases or referring expressions generally, pronouns, demonstratives, adjectives, and perhaps even adverbs, all of which may occur in simple or compound form, and which signifies things; the verb (*verbum*), which necessarily includes tense ('time') and may be transitive or intransitive, formulated with or without the copula, and which signifies actions broadly speaking; and the statement (*enuntiatio*), composed of name and verb, which manages to say something, and which, unlike the name, the verb, or non-sentential combinations of names and verbs, signifies truth or falsity.

The most obvious difficulty Anselm's semantic theory faces is that it seems overly thin, since it provides only a single relation, 'signifying',

[11] See, for instance, *Resp. ad Gaun.* 2 (S I: 132): "If [something] is understood, it follows that it exists in the understanding; for just as what is thought is thought by means of a thought, and what is thought by a thought thereby exists in the thought as it is thought, so too what is understood is understood by means of an understanding, and what is understood by an understanding thereby exists in the understanding as it is understood—what could be clearer than that?" This principle is important for the Ontological Argument of *Prosl.* 2.

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to explain the rich variety of semantic phenomena: reference for names, functionality or 'unsaturatedness' for verbs, truth for statements. Yet he never abandons the theory, and he develops its resources in subtle and nuanced ways that give it far more flexibility than it might have seemed to possess, as we shall see.

2. Names

Of the three linguistic categories, Anselm's theory of signification most straightforwardly applies to names. Just as a statue of Socrates signifies Socrates by bringing him to mind upon encountering his statue, so too the name 'Socrates' signifies Socrates by bringing him to mind upon hearing or reading his name, that is, by bringing it about that Socrates exists in the understanding. Whether the account can be extended to other kinds of names is unclear; I'll consider that shortly. Now it might be thought that there is a problem even in this paradigm case, since it seems as though names, or at least proper names, have to be denotative, since Socrates has to exist in order to exist in the understanding. Hence empty names will not signify anything at all, that is, they will be simply meaningless, which is false.[12] Fortunately, Anselm is not guilty of this confusion. In the middle of the Ontological Argument he draws a clear distinction between thinking of something and thinking that it exists, such that the former does not entail the latter.[13] It may be that we have to encounter Socrates to have an understanding of him (*Mon.* 62; S I: 72), and therefore that he must have existed in reality at some time; but so long as we have the relevant understanding, we can think of Socrates whether he exists or not, and further think of him that he exists or not. Hence proper names are denotative, but they need not actually denote in order to signify (in Anselm's sense).[14] The metaphysical

[12] This is the error Gilbert Ryle ridicules as part of the "'Fido'-Fido Theory of Meaning": if the meaning of a name is identified with its bearer, the nonexistence of the bearer necessarily renders the name meaningless.

[13] *Prosl.* 2 (S I: 101). See King [1981] for an analysis of Anselm's example of the artist, and how the Ontological Argument depends on these semantic principles.

[14] Whether this line of reasoning is ultimately satisfactory is not clear. When Socrates exists, we seem to be thinking of him; when he fails to exist, we may still think of him, but it cannot be given the transparent referential reading it had while he existed. Anselm dodges the question by insisting on the identity of the thinking-of-Socrates with Socrates, when he exists; we still may have a thinking-of-Socrates when Socrates no longer exists—there just won't be anything in the world to which the thinking is now identical. The success of this dodge depends on whether Anselm can plausibly avoid hypostasizing thought-contents by refusing to draw a distinction among thinking, the intentional object of thought, and that to which the object corresponds.

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fact that things may come into being and pass away is compatible with the semantic fact that such things may be signified by proper names.

Yet even if transitory objects do not pose a problem for Anselm's semantics, similar worries crop up in the case of three other kinds of names, worries that Anselm finds much harder to explain: (*a*) privative names, such as 'blind' or 'evil' or 'injustice', that apparently signify a missing feature or quality; (*b*) so-called 'infinite' names, such as 'non-human', that signify through negating something; and (*c*) names that are necessarily empty, in particular the name 'nothing', which paradoxically seems to signify something only by not signifying anything. The root difficulty is that (*a*)–(*c*) seem to lack significates, since each in its own way involves absence, rather than the presence of something.[15] This is hard to explain with only one semantic relation to go around.

Anselm found (*a*)–(*c*) perplexing, and returned to them many times, apparently not satisfied with his attempts to solve them. Take (*c*), for instance: Anselm discusses whether 'nothing' signifies anything in *Mon.* 8 and 19, *De casu Diab.* 11, and *Phil. Frag.* 42 (*s v.* aliquid §3). In *De casu Diab.* 11 he presents the difficulty as a parallel to the case of 'evil' (treated in *De casu Diab.* 10):[16] "If there is not something that is signified by the name 'nothing', it does not signify anything; but if it does not signify anything, it is not a name—yet surely it is a name" (S I: 247). In his response to the dilemma, Anselm begins by proposing that 'nothing' has the same signification as the infinite name 'non-something', that is, taking away everything that is something, indicating that it is not to be included in the understanding. So far so good; Anselm says as much in *Mon.* 19 (S I: 34). But here he recognizes a difficulty with this quantificational approach, namely that infinite names work by signifying the very thing that is to be excluded, so that 'non-*X*' for example signifies *X*, just as the finite name '*X*' does—hardly an accept-

[15] Augustine faced the same difficulty: *De magistro* 2.3. Contemporary philosophers of language treat (*a*)–(*c*) as posing the same kind of puzzle as nondenoting terms, such as 'Socrates' after his death, and solve them all by drawing a distinction between two semantic relations, namely *sense* and *reference*. Such names lack reference, perhaps necessarily, but that does not prevent them from having perfectly good senses, even senses that are negative, privative, or necessarily empty. The fact that Anselm returns again and again to (*a*)–(*c*) is to my mind good grounds for thinking he did *not* draw our distinction between sense and reference. See the discussion of appellation in *De gramm.* 12 below.

[16] Anselm clearly sees the connections among (*a*)–(*c*). In addition to the parallel noted here, he treats them all of a piece in *Phil. Frag.* 42 *loc. cit.*; *De conc. virg.* 5 treats (*a*) and (*c*) together; *De casu Diab.* 10–26 is devoted to the question how we can be afraid of evil if it is nothing; and so on.

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able result, even if we add that somehow it also doesn't signify X (*De casu Diab.* 11; S I: 249). Anselm therefore jettisons the quantificational approach and advances a different argument (*alia ratio*, S I: 250). He now proposes that 'nothing' and 'evil' function grammatically (*secundam formam*) like ordinary names, and so appear to signify something,[17] whereas in reality (*secundum rem*) there is nothing they signify, much the way 'to fear' is an active verb but applies in reality to a feeling engendered in, rather than initiated by, the subject. Now Anselm is surely correct that such names are of a piece with referring expressions despite the fact that they do not refer to any thing, but that merely dodges the question of what their significate is. At some point Anselm floats the suggestion that 'nothing' signifies the absence of anything (*eo carere quod est aliquid*), taking it not as an infinite name but as a privative like 'blindness' (S I: 250)—surely the right way to go. He did not follow up his own suggestion, perhaps because it would lead him to deny that a sign's significate need be anything like a thing at all, which seems to deprive his Augustinian semantics of its intuitive plausibility.[18]

For all the difficulties (a)–(c) pose, and for all the theological weight that rides on correctly understanding them, with respect to semantics they are borderline cases, perhaps exceptions. Most names are straightforwardly denotative, after all, whether what they signify actually exists or not. Let's turn, then, to Anselm's semantic analysis of names in general.

In the midst of explaining the metaphysical details of the Incarnation, Anselm offers a limited sketch of the semantics of noun phrases (*De inc. Verbi* 11; S II: 29):

> When 'man' is uttered, only the nature that is common to all men is signified. But when we say 'this man' or 'that man' demonstratively, or we use the proper name 'Jesus', we designate a person, who has along with the nature a collection of distinctive properties by means of which (a) the common [nature] *man* becomes singular, and (b) is distinguished from other singulars. For when he [=Jesus] is so designated, not any given man is understood, but the one whom the angel announced... It is impossible for the same collection of distinctive properties to belong to different persons, or that

[17] Anselm initially puts the point unfortunately, saying that 'nothing' and 'evil' signify "a quasi-something" (*quasi aliquid*). He does better later, saying that they signify "as though there were something" (*quasi sint aliquid*): see S I: 250–251.

[18] In a slogan: A sign signifies something, but not necessarily some thing. Anselm's ready acceptance of nondenoting terms already hints at this direction. But what are these non-thing 'somethings' that can be the significates of words? Anselm can be forgiven his reluctance to start down this path.

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> they be predicated of one another; the same collection of distinctive properties does not belong to Peter and to Paul, and Peter is not called Paul nor Paul Peter.

Common names, at least those that are natural-kind terms, signify common natures;[19] I will take this claim up shortly. For now, let us focus on the other class of terms. Proper names and demonstratives, at least when applied to humans, designate persons—apart from theological complications, which partly explain Anselm's use of 'designate' here, we can say that they signify concrete individuals of some kind.[20] Such concrete individuals have a collection of 'distinctive properties' (*proprietates*) that make them singulars of a given kind, and set them apart from other singulars of the same kind; these collections are unique to the individuals who have them. Now, Anselm's account raises many metaphysical issues, such as the ontological status of the common nature, whether collections of distinctive properties are logically or merely contingently unique, how the common nature becomes singular, and so on. However, we are concerned with semantics, not metaphysics or theology; what does his account tell us about proper names and demonstrative referring expressions?

Anselm's remarks about the collection of distinctive properties make it clear that he thinks that they are, or at least can be, part of the signification of the proper name.[21] Given that the understanding associated with a proper name is of an individual, it is plausible to think, as Anselm does, that the understanding thus includes some feature or features that distinguish that individual from all others—why it is an understanding of this person rather than that one. Distinctive properties serve the purpose admirably,

[19] Anselm, like other mediæval philosophers, takes semantics to be firmly grounded on metaphysics, so probably would not allow this claim to be generalized to (say) artifact-kinds, such as 'teacup', much less to general referring phrases, such as 'books and hats in my office'.

[20] Anselm reiterates these claims about proper names and demonstrative expressions in *De gramm.* 20 (S I: 166) and *De conc. virg.* 1 (S II: 140). Again, his claims do not obviously generalize to other singular referring expressions, or even to demonstratives combined with other terms (such as 'this pile of bricks'). But given the underlying metaphysics Anselm would probably admit the same considerations to apply *mutatis mutandis* to names of individual substances.

[21] Anselm's initial remark does not decide the issue, since it could be read as maintaining that proper names signify persons in respect of their distinctive properties, or that they merely signify persons, who are, incidentally, made singular through a collection of distinctive properties. (Anselm's Latin inclines to the latter reading, if anything, since he writes *personam quae habet* rather than *habeat.*) His mention of what is understood when Jesus is named is definitive, however.

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since, as Anselm tells us, they accomplish the metaphysical tasks of (*a*) making the individual to be individual, and (*b*) making the individual distinct from other individuals of the same kind. Hence an understanding that includes distinctive properties will therefore be singular by its nature.[22] A term is thus semantically singular if it reflects an instance of 'singular thought' (to use the contemporary expression).

Anselm returns to the semantics of common names in his *De grammatico*, a work explicitly devoted to the philosophy of language. The issue under investigation in that work is not the semantics of common names, however, but roughly what we would call the semantics of adjectives. More precisely, Anselm is concerned with the signification of terms known as 'denominatives'.[23] Denominative terms have a dual grammatical role. On the one hand, they occur as attributive adjectives in combination with a noun they modify. On the other hand, they occur as stand-alone nouns. Grammarians now identify such words as adjectives that can have a substantive use via nominalization, but that begs the question Anselm takes up in the *De grammatico*, namely whether denominatives signify a quality (like adjectives) or a substance (like nouns). For example, the word 'brave' might be used to describe one of Socrates's character-traits in the combination 'brave Socrates' or on its own while occurring as a predicate adjective, as in 'Socrates is brave'; it might also refer to a group of people, having the function of a common name, when it occurs substantivally, as in 'The brave deserve the fruits of victory'. In English we have to say 'the brave' rather than 'brave', but in Latin the selfsame term would be used in attributive/predicative contexts and in substantive contexts. Anselm's example, taken from Aristotle, is the denominative term *grammaticus*, which seems to signify (*a*) grammatical knowledge, when it occurs attributively or predicatively, and (*b*) someone with such knowledge, the grammarian, when it occurs substantivally. Given the exceptional difficulties in translating this term consistently and reasonably, I'll silently modify Anselm's examples to discuss 'brave' instead.[24] Given the presumption that it is one

[22] Strictly speaking this is too fast. An understanding that includes distinctive properties will as a matter of fact pick out only a single individual, but that alone does not suffice to make an expression semantically singular. For the latter, we need to be assured that the expression could only apply to a single thing, and Anselm's discussion, while suggestive, does not go quite so far.

[23] Anselm is here following Aristotle (*Cat.* 1 1^a12–15), and the associated discussion in Boethius's commentary (*In Cat.* 167D–168D). Once again, it is not clear that Anselm would permit generalizing his account to all adnominal phrases.

[24] Anselm carries out much of his discussion in the material mode, asking whether a

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and the same term in different contexts, and given that we cannot easily appeal to the distinct contexts to separate out the senses of the term, this poses an extraordinarily difficult puzzle for Anselm to untangle.

In the end, Anselm opts for the view that denominative terms signify qualities rather than substances. But to reach this conclusion he develops a trio of subtle semantic distinctions at some length (*De gramm.* 12; S I: 156–157):

(1) signification versus appellation
(2) signification *per se* versus signification *per aliud*
(3) signifying things that are unified versus signifying things that are not unified

Each of these calls for further comment.

Regarding (1): Anselm's definition of appellation is unhelpfully circular: "Now I say that name is appellative of some thing by which the thing itself is so-called (*appellatur*) in accordance with ordinary usage (*De gramm.* 12; S I: 157): roughly, 'A' appellates S if calling S 'A' is acceptable ordinary usage.[25] Anselm offers examples: 'man' appellates man, 'brave' appellates humans (the brave ones), 'white' appellates the white horse of the two animals in the stable (a white horse and a black ox).[26] Now it is tempting to read Anselm as describing the semantic relation of reference here.[27] There are two good reasons not to do so. First, reference links a word to an object, its referent, either as part of or as determined by its sense, or independently as the only word-world connection available. But Anselm has a perfectly good word-world connection in signification, which links words to their significates; appellation is used to allow for linking words to objects that may or may not be their significates, and hence should no more be seen as reference than signification itself. Second, reference is a

denominative, *i. e.* what is signified by a denominative term, is a quality or a substance. I will use the formal mode, since Anselm apparently regards the two as purely intertranslateable.

[25] Anselm writes *quo res ipsa usu loquendi appellatur*, which is usually read by commentators as meaning that S is ordinarily called 'A'. But that reading does not fit Anselm's horse-example (discussed below); 'white' is not a name for horses in common speech. In context, however, it would be understood correctly and not flagged as a deviant or bizarre usage—a running concern in *De grammatico*—hence the interpretation of '*usus loquendi*' given here.

[26] See *De gramm.* 14–15 (S I: 161) for Anselm's claim that 'white' appellates the horse in this context.

[27] Many commentators have succumbed to the temptation: see for instance Henry [1974] 211–214, Gombocz [1983] 135, Adams [2000] 85. Marenbon [2002] 82 voices skepticism, rightly in my opinion.

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semantic property of terms, whereas Anselm clearly means appellation to be a feature that terms have in their use, that is, a pragmatic feature linking a sign to an object, perhaps not its significate, on an occasion of use. It is a necessary but not sufficient condition that on such occasions the use of the term be acceptable by competent speakers. Beyond that, context seems to be all that matters; any term could, in principle, appellate any object.

Regarding (2): Signification as described heretofore is what Anselm now calls 'signification *per se*', which he tells us is signification in the strict or proper sense (*De gramm.* 15; S I: 161), to be contrasted with signification *per aliud*. The latter is a variety of signification, and hence conforms to the general analysis in which signifying is a matter of bringing something to mind. But what a term signifies *per aliud* is not what it ordinarily brings to mind, that is, its *per se* significate; instead, it brings something else to mind through some further feature, a feature not included in the term's proper signification, such as additional knowledge. Anselm draws the distinction in *De gramm.* 14 (S I: 161) with the example of the barn animals mentioned in the discussion of (1) above. If someone is given a stick and told to hit the animal, he will not know which is meant, but if he asks and is told "The white one"—the Latin is only "*Albus*"—then by 'white' he would understand that the horse is meant rather than the ox, and hence 'white' brings to his mind the horse, despite being no part of the proper signification of 'white' (which is the quality *whiteness*). Presumably anything brought to mind by a term that is not strictly part of its proper signification is thereby signified *per aliud*, at least if the connection is not merely associative.[28] Furthermore, this distinction applies to all names and verbs, since any of them can bring something else to mind through additional knowledge or belief (*De gramm.* 15; S I: 161).

Regarding (3): Anselm explains signifying *ut unum* ('as one') in *De gramm.* 20 as a matter of the kinds of unity the signified elements may have.[29] He describes three fundamental types of unity there (S I: 166): (*a*) the composition of parts belonging to the same category, as when soul and body combine to make up an animal, presumably in hylomorphic fashion; (*b*) the agreement of a genus with differentia, whether one or many, as in the unity *rational animate body* produced by successively adding the differentiae *animateness* and *rationality* to the genus *body*; (*c*) the species combined with the collection of distinctive properties, producing an individual such as

[28] Anselm rejects mere psychological association because the associated items are not brought to mind through something else (the literal meaning of '*per aliud*'); they are just extraneous occurrences, stray thoughts. See *De gramm.* 14 (S I: 160).

[29] Hence the translation 'as unified': see Adams [2000] 86.

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Plato. The several elements of (*a*)–(*c*) are signified, or brought to mind, as making up a genuine unity. This contrasts with so-called 'accidental unities' such as *music* and *man* (which together make up a musical man), 'featherless biped' (lacking the unity of definition), disaggregated parts, and the like.[30] Now there are presumably many distinctions we could draw among the significates of words; (3) is special in that it seems to be Anselm's way of getting at the distinctive unity of signification some terms have. Unlike terms that signify a mere plurality of things, these special terms signify things that are unified, and furthermore signifies them to be so unified.

With these distinctions (1)–(3) in place, Anselm can describe the semantics of denominative terms with subtle precision. He begins by noting how the distinctions apply in the case of common names, to illuminate denominatives by contrast. In *De inc. Verbi* 11, cited above, we saw that common names signify common natures. Here in *De gramm.* 12 (S I: 156–157) Anselm tells us that 'man' signifies *per se* and as a unity "those things out of which *man* is made as a whole," *i. e.* the common nature *man*, [31] and furthermore appellates the same, that is, can be used in ordinary discourse to talk about the species—and presumably its members as well, though not as the individuals they are (which would require proper names instead).

Denominatives are more complex. Anselm begins his analysis in *De gramm.* 12 by arguing that a term like 'brave' signifies bravery *per se.* Now it's clear that bravery is at least part of the significative content of 'brave', since hearing the word brings the quality to mind. (If it didn't then it wouldn't be a word involving anything brave at all.) However, 'brave' does not bring bravery to mind the way 'bravery' does; Anselm takes 'bravery' to function as a common name and hence to conform to the analysis of 'man' just given. Hence 'brave' and 'bravery' both signify bravery *per se*, but the latter signifies it as a unity composed of its genus and specific differentiae, whereas the former does not. Now does 'brave' include anything further in

[30] Whether Anselm would sanction the extension of (3) to artificial wholes as well as natural wholes is an open question. Certainly a house with floor, walls, and ceiling in good order differs from a mere heap of house-parts, and the difference seems to be precisely that the parts are appropriately unified in the former case but not in the latter; 'house' picks out not merely house-parts but house-parts *ut unum*, that is, properly arranged.

[31] Anselm describes *substance* as the principal element in *man*, and remarks that we must also take into account all the differentiae running down the Porphyrean Tree. He does not explicitly say in this passage that he is concerned with the common name as opposed to speaking of '(a) man'—the lack of articles in Latin leave the question open—but it is clear from the surrounding discussion that this is his concern. See also the end of *De gramm.* 19 (S I: 165).

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its signification *per se*? It seems like it does: the notion that the quality of bravery is possessed by something, namely by brave men. But Anselm argues against this suggestion at length in *De gramm.* 13. If 'brave' signified the brave man *per se*, he notes, then several unacceptable consequences follow: *brave man* would be a species of *man*, since it would signify only men but not all of them; likewise it would be impossible for there to be a brave non-man, although this is at least an intelligible possibility; it would be redundant rather than informative to call someone a 'brave man' (rather than just a 'brave'). Furthermore, 'brave man' would lead to an infinite regress, because since 'brave' would signify the brave man *per se*, 'brave man' would mean the same as 'brave man man', which in turn would mean the same as 'brave man man man', and so on.[32] Hence 'brave' doesn't signify anything further *per se*.

Still, there is something to the notion that 'brave' involves brave men, or at least things that are brave, in a way in which 'bravery' does not. Anselm accommodates this intuition by claiming that 'brave' signifies brave men *per aliud*, and appellates them as well. Working through the example of the white horse in *De gramm.* 14, he reasons as follows. When we hear 'brave' we think of bravery (its signification *per se*), and furthermore we often also think of men in whom bravery is found—not because that is part of the meaning of the word, but because the thought of bravery prompts us to think of those in whom it is found, even though this metaphysical fact is outside the semantic purview of 'brave'; hence 'brave' brings men to mind, though indirectly, which is to say that it signifies men *per aliud*.[33] Familiarity has endorsed the usage, so that we often use 'brave' to speak of men rather than of bravery, although this is, strictly speaking, an extended sense of the term. That is to say, 'brave' appellates men. Hence in the case of denominatives, unlike common names, appellation goes hand-in-hand with signification *per aliud*.

To sum up: denominatives signify *per se*, as do their corresponding common names, but while the latter also signify as a unity and appellate what they signify *per se*, the former signify *per aliud* and appellate the sub-

[32] The same regress can be motivated against the more general proposals that 'brave' signifies *per se* either (*a*) something brave; (*b*) having-bravery; (*c*) something-having-bravery. See *De gramm.* 20–21 (S I: 165–168). Technically the difficulty here is a *nugatio*, of the sort Aristotle famously describes regarding the meaning of 'snub' as snub-nosed.

[33] Since 'brave' signifies men only *per aliud*, it cannot signify bravery and men as a unified whole; hence it can at best represent them as an accidental unity, which is what in fact a brave man is (metaphysically speaking).

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jects of what they signify *per se*. To the question with which the *De grammatico* begins, namely whether denominatives signify substance or quality, this is Anselm's subtle and nuanced reply.

There is one last topic to take up with respect to names: how they can change or shift their signification in different contexts. In *Mon.* 1 (S I: 14), Anselm notes that 'good' can systematically vary its meaning depending on the words with which is combined. A horse is called 'good' because it is strong and swift, but a strong and swift thief is not likewise called good. This curious linguistic fact is elevated into a principle when applied to God: names like 'present (in a place)' acquire "different understandings" when applied to God and to creatures "due to the dissimilarity of the things" (*Mon.* 22 S I: 40). By the time he reaches *Mon.* 65, Anselm has expanded this into the foundation of his account of God's ineffability: God is so "vastly beyond" anything else that the names we apply have only a thin connection with their ordinary usage (*tenuem significationem*, S I: 76). Instead, when I hear the names I can hardly help but think of the creatures they signify, even though I know full well that God transcends them. Now the semantics underlying this process are not entirely clear, but we can take it as a reflection on how we are not always completely aware of the boundaries of our concepts with which we think about things. They may appear to be sharp-edged, as when we think about wolves by calling wolfhood to mind. But even here we might wonder whether werewolves are signified though our understanding—they are, after all, quite different from ordinary wolves. Since semantics is founded on psychology, meaning is prey to all the sins of thought, and Anselm takes that to include cases in which we don't have any clear idea of how our understanding might get hold of something, just the conviction that it does. So it is in the case of God.

3. Verbs

Anselm follows Aristotle in taking the distinctive feature of verbs to be that they have tense—or, since Anselm has no separate word for verbal tense, that they are words that somehow involve time. Aristotle, in Boethius's translation, said that the way the verb involves time is that it *consignifies* time (*De int.* 3 16^b6), a remark that flummoxed many philosophers since it seems to add a new and ill-understood dimension to signification. Anselm apparently did not find consignification useful. In all his writings, he only speaks once of consignification: at the end of *De gramm.* 13, he argues that if denominatives signified their subjects as well as their qualities, then 'belonging-to-today' (*hodiernum*) would not be a name but a verb, since "it signifies something with time" and hence "is an expression

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consignifying time" (S I: 159). The expressions are treated as equivalent, and there no need to introduce a new semantic relation of consignification. The full technical apparatus of signification, as described above, carries over to verbs.

All verbs signify something with time, even the copula: 'was' (*fuit*) and 'will-be' (*erit*) signify past and future respectively (*Mon.* 21; S I: 38). This causes a problem in describing God, who is nontemporal, or more exactly lives in an eternal present. Adverbs change their signification; 'always' (*semper*), for instance, normally designates the whole of time, but when applied to God is more properly understood to signify eternity (*Mon.* 24; S I: 42).[34] For that matter, Anselm explains, the Apostle Paul often writes about God using verbs of past tense precisely because there is no tense properly signifying the eternal present (*De conc.* 1.5; S II: 254); nor is God properly said either to foreknow, to predestine, or the like, since these verbs involve temporal location as well as tense (*ibid.*; see also *De conc.* 2.2 S II: 261). Apart from these remarks, Anselm has nothing special to say about either how verbs signify something with time, or about the several kinds of time (tense) they exemplify. Yet there seems to be a more serious omission.

Considering the care Anselm lavishes on the semantics of denominatives, or on how to understand 'nothing', it may come as a surprise that he never systematically analyzes predication, or that he says little about it apart from exceptional contexts (such as relative predication in the Trinity: *Mon.* 15–17). After all, what justifies separating the semantics of verbs from that of names, in the eyes of contemporary philosophers of language, is that verbs have 'unsaturatedness': they combine with names to produce statements. If verbs are no more than names, albeit with the special feature of involving time in their signification, how do they produce statements in combination with nontemporal names? Names added to names result in no more than lists, or at best longer noun-phrases. If the aristotelian tradition in the philosophy of language has nothing more to say about verbs than that they have tense, it is not worth our attention. Or so the charge runs.

Anselm's reply to this charge is compelling, I think, although it is easy to miss, since it is not so much argued for explicitly as it is built into his very approach to the philosophy of language and its underlying metaphysics. As a first approximation, his reply runs like this. The different linguistic categories, *name* and *verb*, pick out different fundamental constituents of the world: broadly speaking, the former signify agents and the latter actions;

[34] This is an instance of a general truth for Anselm, namely that words systematically change their signification when applied to God, as noted at the end of §2.

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their predicative conjunction combines an agent with an action, to signify (or fail to signify) a particular event in the world. The semantic feature of 'unsaturatedness' corresponds to the metaphysical dependence of actions on agents, of deeds on their doers. Statements, at least true statements, manage to identify the two aspects found in any particular event, namely who is doing something and what is being done.

Such is Anselm's reply to the charge of negligence lodged earlier. Its doctrines pervade his writings, usually without being explicitly proclaimed or defended; they colour all his work while staying largely out of the spotlight. Yet occasionally they take their turn on the stage. Anselm's most explicit remarks about certain parts of his reply are found, surprisingly, in his uncompleted *Philosophical Fragments*. I will concentrate here on how verbs signify actions, broadly speaking, and how they effect predicative conjunctions.

Anselm begins his investigations into the verb with his remark that "the verb 'to do' (*facere*) is typically used as a proxy for any finite or infinite verb, no matter what its signification."[35] Proof of this is found in the fact that we can ask sensibly of anyone "What is she doing?" and be given any verb whatsoever as an appropriate reply: 'reading' or 'writing', for instance; these verbs paradigmatically signify actions. But the same point holds, Anselm argues, for verbs that don't conform to the paradigm. Verbs that signify not actions but 'endurings', that is, verbs that signify things that happen to their subjects rather than things their subjects do,[36] also count as 'actions' for Anselm's purposes: 'being struck' or 'being scared' count as proper replies. So too for verbs that pick out states of the subject, such as 'sitting' or 'being in church'. Thus all verbs signify 'doings' in a suitably broad sense.[37] For all that, Anselm thinks that the sense of *facere* is not stretched so far as to be empty, even while covering such disparate cases. He describes six ways in which it is used in ordinary discourse (*Phil. Frag.* 28–34); since it is the most generic verb available, other verbs will inherit some of these usages as well, though which ones depend on the verb in question

[35] *Phil. Frag.* 25; see also *De ver.* 5 (S I: 182).

[36] Again, see also *De ver.* 5 (S I: 182). Anselm notes that the grammatical distinction between active and passive voice usually matches the distinction between verbs that signify actions and those that signify endurings, though not always: *De ver.* 8 (S I: 187).

[37] This sense encompasses at least items in the category of Action (actions properly so-called), Passion ('endurings'), and State, and perhaps items in the category of Relation and Position too. Combined with the copula, of course, items in all the nine dependent categories could be verbally linked to substances, but Anselm does not mention this possibility.

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(*Phil. Frag.* 34–35). The classification, as Anselm notes, is complex and intricate (*Phil. Frag.* 28), but there is no need to go through its details here; it is sufficient for our purposes to note that Anselm finds enough content in 'to do' to distinguish several senses, and even to construct a logical Square of Opposition for them.[38] The general explanation behind the classification, Anselm tells us, is that the subject of which a verb is predicated is said to do or to cause[39] what is signified by that verb; every cause 'does' that of which it is the cause (*Phil. Frag.* 26). If Socrates sits, he is the cause of the sitting that takes place, which is what is signified by the verb 'sits'. Therefore, all verbs, broadly speaking, signify what their subjects 'do'.

With this background, we can now turn to Anselm's account of predicative conjunction. Later in the *Philosophical Fragments* he is analyzing how causes can cause things to be as well as not to be, and in the course of his discussion he offers a compact and lucid description of predication (*Phil. Frag.* 41–42):[40]

> When we refer to the Sun [by the name 'Sun'] we are speaking of some thing, but it is not yet signified to be a cause. Likewise, when I say 'shines' I am speaking of something, but I do not yet signify it to be the effect of anything. But when I say "The sun shines" the Sun is the cause and shining the effect, and each is something and exists, since the Sun has its own being and it makes (*facit*) the light to exist.

Thus 'Sun' signifies some thing, namely the actual Sun; 'shines' signifies something, namely *shining*; when combined, the former is signified to be the cause of the latter—the linguistic act of predication is underwritten by the underlying causal relations among the significates of the terms.[41] Causal relations in Anselm's broad sense, of course; the same analysis applies to simple existential statements, which are not causal in any ordinary fashion:

[38] For further details of Anselm's account in the *Philosophical Fragments*, see Serene [1974] and [1983], Walton [1976a] and [1976b], Segerberg [1992]

[39] The verb *facere* has the several senses 'to do', 'to make', 'to cause', 'to bring about'; no single English translation can do it justice. Note that it is one and the same verb in question, though.

[40] Anselm offers a similar account for "Man is animal" (*Homo est animal*) in his *Phil. Frag.* 27, but the case of the Sun is more perspicuous (and does not involve difficulties with Latin's lack of articles).

[41] Anselm's remarks at the end of the passage about the Sun and the shining each having their own being are part of his analysis of causal contexts at this point, and not strictly part of the account of predication. Statements need not postulate the existence of the things they involve. Good thing, too, since Anselm immediately turns to cases in which one thing causes another not to be.

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in the statement "Socrates exists" (*Socrates est*) Socrates is the cause that existence (*esse*) is said of him.[42] We may summarize his account as follows. Names and verbs signify subjects and actions (broadly speaking); when combined, the name also signifies its significate as a cause, namely a cause of that effect, and the verb also signifies its significate as an effect, namely an effect of that cause.

This description of Anselm's account raises two question. First, where did the name and the verb acquire their additional significations of their significates as cause and as effect, respectively? Second, even if we grant that predicative force is underwritten by causal relations, how does a string of words acquire that predicative force?

One strategy for answering these questions would be to hold that statements, unlike names and verbs, have their own peculiar semantic properties, and to see it as part of the function of subject-position (say) to signify the causal role of whatever the name in isolation signifies. Predicative force would be built into the nature of statements as a distinct category of linguistic utterance, and therefore not reducible to semantic properties of names or verbs.

Yet, however congenial we may find this strategy, it is not the one Anselm pursues. Instead he follows the path laid down by his general semantics and tries to explain the properties of statements solely by the linguistic elements that occur in statements. Insofar as a name signifies something, it signifies it as a (potential) cause; that is part of what it is to be signified as a thing, since that is part of what it is to be a thing itself, namely to be able to perform actions, broadly speaking. Likewise, verbs signify their actions as (potential) effects, for similar reasons—the actions that are signified are at least potentially the actions of some agent, again broadly speaking. So much for the first question raised above.

As for the second question, Anselm thinks of predicative force as a feature of the verb. On this score he is again following Aristotle, who tells us that someone who hears a verb in isolation is in a state of suspension, waiting to hear more (*De int.* 3 16^b21–22). Verbs, unlike names, have a kind of free-floating dependence that is only discharged in combination with a name. (It reflects the metaphysical dependence actions have on agents, and the relative independence of agents from actions.) This linguistic dependence is part of the signification of every verb.[43] Strings of names do not make statements, since names do not have predicative force. Strings of verbs

[42] Adapted from the discussion in *Phil. Frag.* 27, where Anselm says literally: "Hence what is conceived is the cause that being (*esse*) is said of it."

[43] The official account of verbs, as noted above, declares that their distinctive feature

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likewise do not make statements, since their predicative force needs a name in order to be discharged. The only combination that works is a name and a verb, and it works because of the signification of the verb. In short, a verb is a statement waiting to happen.

4. Statements

Anselm speaks at times of expressions (*orationes*) and sentences (*propositiones*), but his preferred way of speaking is to talk about statements (*enuntiationes*). This term is as elastic in Latin as its translation is in English. 'Statement' can mean the actual utterance, or what is said by the actual utterance; in a pinch it even serves for our modern notion of a proposition, namely an abstract entity that is the (timeless) bearer of truth and falsity. Anselm happily leaves his usage vague for the most part. But when precision is called for, he usually takes it to mean the utterance. So it is when he turns to the distinctive semantic feature of statements, their possession of truth-value.[44]

Just as Anselm's theory of meaning applies to more than words, so too his theory of truth applies to more than statements. In the *De veritate* Anselm puts forward an account that recognizes a wide variety of things to be capable of truth—statements, thoughts, volitions, actions, the senses, even the very being of things. Truth, for Anselm, is a normative notion: something is true when it is as it ought to be. Thus truth is in the end a matter of correctness (*rectitudo*), the correctness appropriate in each instance (*De ver.* 11; S I: 191). Anselm links his theory of truth to his theological concerns as well, in his analysis of sin and in his identification of God as Truth. Despite Anselm's wider concerns, I will only consider truth from the semantic point of view.

Anselm discusses the truth of statements in *De veritate* 2, as a way of beginning his general inquiry into truth, since truth and falsity are usually taken to be features of statements. The Student declares that statements are true "when it is as [the statement] says," a claim that holds for both affirmations and denials (S I: 177). But as the Teacher correctly notes, this does not explain what the truth of the statement consists in; its truth-

is that they signify time. It is not clear how this explains their predicative force. Perhaps it has to do with the fact that actions, even in Anselm's broad sense, are events that take place in time. But Anselm does not supply any explanation.

[44] Anselm sometimes talks sloppily of statements signifying truth or falsity. If we took him literally, statements would be names of these properties, which they clearly are not. Instead, this phrase must be shorthand for the success of some statements at signifying the world the way it is; see his account of truth described below.

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conditions are not its truth, but at best might be the cause of its truth. If truth is a property of statements, Anselm reasons, we have to identify it as something in the statement itself. Three candidates are proposed: (*a*) the utterance of the statement; (*b*) its signification; (*c*) something in the definition of 'statement'. Yet none of (*a*)–(*c*) will do, because each of these features is present and can remain unchanged whether the statement is true or false. What then is truth, over and above truth-conditions?

The modern answer—that truth consists in the correspondence of the statement to reality, or more generally that truth is satisfaction—will not do for Anselm, since correspondence is not a property of a statement, but the relation between the statement, or, better, what the statement says, and the world. The fact that "Snow is white" corresponds to a state of the world is not a property of the statment, but is at best a relational fact about it as regards the world.

Anselm's answer is that the truth of a true statement consists in its doing what statements should do, namely, signify the world the way it is for affirmations; *mutatis mutandis* for denials. If we consider the matter carefully, there are five elements at play in Anselm's analysis:

(T1) Snow is white
(T2) "Snow is white" ought to signify that snow is white
(T3) "Snow is white" (successfully) signifies that snow is white
(T4) "Snow is white" ought to signify the world the way it is
(T5) "Snow is white" (successfully) signifies the world the way it is

Suppose that snow is white, as (T1) declares. Then the statement "Snow is white" has a complex relation to that state of affairs. As (T2) says, the statement "Snow is white" is designed to express the claim that snow is white. More precisely, it "has undertaken to signify" (*accepit significare*) that snow is white. We normally use those words to express that sense. Something could go wrong; we might be talking to someone who did not understand what we were saying. But whether we are successful or not, a tokening of the expression "Snow is white" is meant to signify that snow is white. If we are in fact successful, then (T3) holds in addition to (T2).[45] Likewise, Anselm thinks, it is part of what it is to be an affirmative statement to try to say how things are, or, more precisely, to signify the world the way it is. In contemporary parlance, the difference between (T2) and (T4) is that the former simply expresses a propositional content, whereas the latter expresses a propositional content that corresponds to the facts.[46]

[45] Modern discussions bypass Anselm's (T2) and (T3) by specifying the language as part of the Tarski schema, since we are impatient about fixing meanings.

[46] Near the end of *De ver.* 2, Anselm makes some misleading remarks in which he suggests

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Statements not only (try to) say things, they (try to) say things that match up with the world. Again, statements may succeed or fail in this aim; hence the distinction between (T4) and (T5). If (T1)–(T5) hold, we have succeeded in saying something true.

There turn out to be not one but two truths operative in (T1)–(T5): the correctness embodied in (T3) and (T5). The statement "Snow is white" does what it should do when it succeeds in signifying that snow is white; it also does what it should do when it succeeds in signifying that snow is white in the circumstances that snow really is white. The latter is the closest to our contemporary notion of truth for statements, but Anselm insists that the former is a kind of truth too (he calls it "the truth of signification"), and indeed can hold even if the world changes—that is, (T3) can hold even when (T5) fails (S I: 179).

On Anselm's analysis, then, the truth of a statement consists in its doing both of the things it ought. For (T5) to hold, of course, both (T3) and (T1) have to hold; hence the truth involved in (T5) depends on there being the appropriate correspondence between what is said and the world. But truth does not consist in correspondence, even if it depends on it; truth consists in correctness, and as such is a property of tokened sentences.

This conclusion holds only for such sentence-tokens, though; Anselm is quite clear that the truths expressed by true sentences are in fact eternal. He offers a pair of arguments to that end in *Mon.* 18 (S I: 33).[47]

First, the truth "Something was going to exist" never began to be true, since if it is ever true it has always been true; nor will the truth "Something was past" ever cease to be true, since if it is ever true it will always be true. Yet neither of these statements can be true apart from truth. Hence truth has no beginning or end, and is therefore eternal. Second, if truth were to have a beginning or an end, then before it began it was true that it was not, and likewise after it ends it will be true that it will not be; this is an evident absurdity. Anselm here is trying to link his theory of semantic truth with his more general theological view that God, who is eternal, is Truth; since his ontology already contains an eternal being, he adds nothing by having eternal truths, and therefore (in some sense) eternal truth-bearers distinct from statements. But the details of his account depend on his views in the

that (T2) and (T3) are somehow "natural" and "unchangeable" whereas (T4) and (T5) are "accidental" and depend on the occasion of their use. The only sense in which the former are 'natural' is by fixing the language and the conventions for signification, and the only sense in which the latter depend on their use is that they may or may not be true depending on how the world is when the statement is uttered.

[47] See also *De ver.* 10 (S I: 190).

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philosophy of religion rather than the philosophy of language, so we will not explore them here.

Further Reading

Serious study of Anselm's philosophy of language began with Desmond Paul Henry's groundbreaking research into the *De grammatico*. The careful and detailed translation of that dialogue provided in Henry [1964] has its match in his later commentary on it in Henry [1974]. These works and the specialized studies in Henry [1967], [1972], and [1984] make the case that Anselm had a full range of technical apparatus with which he approached questions in the philosophy of language, an apparatus best approximated by Lesniewski's logical systems of Ontology and Mereology. Henry's painstaking analyses of individual passages have been influential, but his general case has not found many followers; see Adams [2000] and Marenbon [2002] for proper homage to Henry's accomplishments tempered by skepticism about his success. Colish [1968], its conclusions slightly updated in Colish [1983], is an alternative approach to Anselm's philosophy of language that usefully sets it in its proper historical context. Shimizu [1999] is a specialized study of Anselm's general semantics in comparison to his younger contemporary Peter Abelard; his approach is unusual. Adams [1990] is an overview of Anselm's entire theory of truth, including semantic truth. Anselm's account of verbal 'doing' and agency in general is the concern of Serene [1983], Walton [1976a] and [1976b], and Segerberg [1992]. Serene [1974] includes a translation and commentary on the *Philosophical Fragments*. Bencivenga [1993] is a lively attempt to re-think Anselm's approach to philosophical questions in light of the limits of meaning and ineffability (hence the "nonsense" of his title).

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