

Words and Concepts in Anselm and Abelard

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The main concern of the present article is with the theory of words and concepts in Anselm and Abelard. The Augustinian tradition tells us that mental concepts are words (*verba*) and that they correspond to God's Word, and the expository tradition since Philo combines the story of creation with Plato's *Timaeus*, identifying primordial ideas in God's mind before creation with God's words, or Word. By contrast, grammar—the preliminary or introductory discipline in early medieval schools—begins its course from vocal sounds (*voces*), so that words in grammar are defined as 'vocal entities'. Furthermore, dialectic treats names and verbs as a subspecies of *vox significativa secundum placitum*, at least in the relevant chapter of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. How, then, did the scholars at that period deal with the supposed inconsistency between these secular disciplines and the traditional Christian teaching on words?

To answer this question, I shall first examine a theory of the signification of names in the field of grammar from the late eleventh century, and show that the dominant tendency at that time was to interpret grammar on the basis of Aristotle's theory of categories. Then, I shall go on to examine Anselm and Abelard's viewpoints to show that both, basing themselves on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, introduced new theories on signification independently from the theory in grammar, while they differed from each other in how to accept the Augustinian theory of God's Word and consequently on how to apprehend words in general.

1. Grammatical Theories before Anselm

1.1 Priority of Grammar in Alcuin

I have examined elsewhere the theory of signification in Alcuin in the ninth century and have shown that he recognized the differences between the teaching of Priscian's Grammar and Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* concerning some parts of speech and, for the sake of consistency in the liberal arts, put priority on the former, with an interpretation and correction based on the Aristotelian theory of categories, or more exactly on *Categoriae Decem*.¹ As a result, signification exists between a word and a thing, or things, these things being interpreted by the theory of categories.

For instance, Alcuin interpreted *definitum significans* as that a name in a proposition signifies a certain particular thing, and similarly a verb signifies a certain particular action or passion, while

¹ SHIMIZU Tetsuro, Alcuin's Theory of Signification and System of Philosophy, in *Didascalica*, 2, 1998. Also I have remarked that Alcuin did not recognize the notion of God's speaking in creation — a point taken up later in this paper.

a name by itself signifies an indefinite, or universal, thing under some category.

Again, Alcuin defines the property of name² as:

The property of a name is to signify substance, or quality, or quantity.

(*Proprium nominis est substantiam vel qualitatem vel quantitatem significare.*)³

This is a revision of the corresponding definition in Priscian: '*Proprium nominis est substantiam et qualitatem significare.*'⁴ Alcuin's revision is explicitly based on the theory of categories. The reason for the revision from 'et' to 'vel' must be that no name can signify things in more than one category, and if a name signifies a thing under the category of substance, it cannot signify one under the category of quality. The reason for adding 'quantity' must be that not only substance and quality, but also quantity and relation among the ten categories can be the object of a name's signification, for other categories are involved in verbs or adverbs. The reason why Alcuin did not mention 'relation' (*ad aliquod*) in the preceding quotation also lies in Alcuin's treatment of common names that express a relation.⁵

Thus, a combination of Priscian's grammar and the Aristotelian theory of categories was dominant in Alcuin's theory of signification.

1.2 Signification of a name in the *Glosule* on Priscian

There seems to be a similar tendency in the late eleventh century as well, especially concerning the notion of signification and the way of interpreting Priscian on the basis of the theory of categories, though the conclusions of this interpretation are quite different from Alcuin's. We can recognize these points in the anonymous *Glosule* on books I-XVI of Priscian's *Institutiones Grammaticae*, presumably from the second half of the 11th century.⁶

In the following, I will focus my attention on its interpretation of the passage: '*proprium nominis est substantiam et qualitatem significare.*'

First, in the *Glosule* the anonymous commentator is aware of the inconsistency between this passage of Priscian and Aristotle's *Categoriae*, and explains that here *substantia* should be accepted in the wider sense as every *essentia*, i.e. being, and *qualitas* as every *proprietas*, which includes true quality, quantity, or other accidents, and not in the strict sense used in the *Categoriae*. Based

² Though the term 'nomen' in a grammatical context is usually translated as 'noun', I prefer to use 'name', for I focus my attention on the field where grammatical and dialectical theories converge.

³ Alcuinus, *Grammatica*, PL,101,858D.

⁴ Priscianus, *Inst. Grammat.*, ed. Keil., I,55,1.6.

⁵ Shimizu, *art. cit.* I am grateful to John Marenbon for asking why Alcuin nominated these three categories and not others, when I read a draft of this paper.

⁶ I owe much to Constant Mews concerning basic information as well as the reading of the MS. See: *Id.*, Nominalism and Theology before Abaelard: New Light on Roscelin of Compiègne., in *Vivarium* 30-1,1992: p.4-33. See also: Irene Rosier and †Jean Stefanini, Théories médiévales du pronom et du nom général, in Sten Ebbessen and E.F.Konrad Koerner, eds., *De ortu grammaticae: studies in medieval grammar and linguistic theory in memory of Jan Pinborg*,1990,p.285-303.

on this comment, the *Glosule* revises Priscian's definition as: 'The property of a name is that it *signifies* something *with* a quality, i.e., *with* a proper or common property' (significare ... essentiam cum qualitate, id est cum proprietate propria uel communi).⁷ Then the commentator goes on to explain this revised definition in detail. A proper name, e.g., 'Socrates', signifies a certain individual, distinguished from others by the properties that are proper to that individual. A common name, e.g., 'man', also signifies Socrates and other human beings, with the properties common to all of them, i.e., a rational mortal animal.

Propria enim nomina sic sunt inventa et imposita ut semper significant aliquam certam personam discretam ab aliis per aliquas certas proprietates; ... Socrates significat certam personam et discretam ab aliis non in substantia esse sed per has proprietates quod Sophronisci filius est, quod poeta et alia huiusmodi;

Similiter appellatiua sunt inuenta ad designandas substantias similes aliis in aliqua qualitate, ut homo significat plures cum una communi proprietate, scilicet cum rationalitate, et mortalitate,⁸

The commentator further explains the revised definition, 'to signify something with a quality', by showing two kinds of significations. The author argues, 'A name does not signify a substance and a quality at once by nomenclature, but it names only a substance, for it is imposed on it, while signifying a quality not by nomenclature, but by representing and determining concerning the substance.... so that "man" signifies the thing Socrates and other men, i.e., by naming it, determining rationality and mortality concerning it, and it does this by representing these [i.e., properties]'.

Notandum est tamen quod nomen non significat substantiam et qualitatem insimul nuncupatiue, sed substantiam nominat tantum, quia ei fuit impositum, qualitatem uero significat non nuncupatiue, immo representando et determinando circa substantiam; propter quam tamen notandam substantiae fuit impositum.

Quare omne nomen duas habet significationes: una per impositionem in substantia, alteram per

⁷ The following quotation is based only on the 1502 edition (*e*) of the *Glosule*, except the last sentence, which follows Mews, *art.cit.*, p.17, n.36.

[ad II,18 e 24v]: *Proprium est nominis substantiam et qualitatem significare.....*Notandum est quia non accipit hic substantiam secundum hoc quod dicitur substantia est res subsistens accidentibus, sed accipit large pro omni essentia, et qualiter[=qualitatem] non secundum quod ponitur in suo praedicamento, sed ponit[ur] hic pro quaelibet proprietate, uel sit uera qualitas, uel quantitas, uel quodlibet aliud accidens, et est sic exponendum: proprium est nominis substantiam cum qualitate significare tantum secundum hoc quod est nomen, id est secundum suam inuentionem.

si autem dicat propriam uel communem, hoc non dicitur secundum hoc quod est nomen, sed in quantum est proprium nomen uel appellatiuum nomen. Proprium est nominis significare scilicet quamcunque essentiam cum qualitate, id est cum proprietate propria uel communi. scilicet significat illam substantiam ad quam designandam est inuentum, uel discretam ab alia per aliquam proprietatem uel similem communionem alicuius proprietatis.

⁸ ad II,18 K 13ra e 24v, Mews,*art. cit.*, p.17, n.36. The quotation is according to Mews' reading based on *e* and the Cologne MS(K).

representationem in qualitate ipsius substantiae, ut homo per impositionem significat rem Socratis et ceterorum hominum, id est nominando determinans circa illa rationalitatem et mortalitatem et hoc representando.⁹

Thus the first kind of signification is 'nominare substantiam', the second is 'significare qualitatem representando et determinando circa substantiam'. That is, given a thing that is a man, e.g., Socrates, then the name 'substance' signifies the thing, among others, and the name 'man' signifies the same thing, among other men, as well. The former, however, determines nothing concerning the thing, or it may be said to determine that it has the quality of being under the category substance, while the latter determines rationality and other (special) differences concerning the thing. 'Socrates', on the other hand, signifies the thing exclusively and determines individual properties concerning it.

The commentator shows a similar procedure in his analysis of adjectival names as well. That is, 'a white (thing)' signifies, i.e., names, a corporeal thing, while it signifies the whiteness by representation.

Similiter album per impositionem significat corpus id est nuncupatiue, quia qui dixit "dicatur haec res alba", non dixit "substantia et albedo dicantur alba", in quo notatur impositio, albedinem uero significat per representationem, ut principalem causam.¹⁰

Again, the commentator compares a proper name with a pronoun. A pronoun is said to signify pure substance without determining any qualities, i.e. any properties.

Debent enim pronomina puram substantiam significare. dicimus Socratem designare substantiam quamdam qualitibus affectam; quam ipsam significant ego et tu, sed non representant ibi qualitates; quod facit Socrates.¹¹

Although the commentator points out that the usage of 'qualitas' in the present context is different from the one in the context of the categories, as we have already seen, nevertheless, there is a similar usage of 'qualitas' in Aristotle's *Categoriae* (cap.5.3b19) that 'a white (thing)' signifies nothing other than a quality, while genus and species determine a quality concerning a substance (genus et species circa substantiam qualitatem determinant).

Boethius' commentary on this passage explicitly shows the strong relationship to the *Glosule* as well. He distinguishes the two senses of quality, i.e., *qualitas per se* and *qualitas secundarum substantiarum*. It is the latter kind of quality that is said 'circa substantiam qualitatem determinare'.¹² This interpretation as well as Aristotle's text seems suitable to the theory of the *Glosule* at least concerning names of species and genus, only if the *Categoriae* can be said here to

⁹ ad II, 18 K 13rb e 24v, Mews, *art. cit.*, p.17, n.37.; L.M.De Rijk, *Logica Modernorum* II-1, Assen, 1967, p.228n.

¹⁰ ad II, 18 K 13rb e 24v, Mews, *art. cit.*, p.17, n.38.

¹¹ *Id.*, *ibid.*, p.19, n.38: ad II, 18 K 13ra e 24v.

¹² Boethius, *In Categ. Aristot.*, lib I, PL 64, 195A-C.

be concerned with the names of species and genus. For concerning the substance, or the name, 'man', both Boethius and the commentator understand 'rationality' and 'mortality' as the qualities that are determined concerning a substance by the species according to Boethius, or by the name of the species according to the *Glosule*.

On the other hand, there seems to be a difference between Boethius and the *Glosule*. Boethius distinguishes the cases of genus and species from the cases of quality (*qualitas per se*) and other accidents, while the commentator applies the interpretation of the former also to names of quality in its proper sense, saying, 'Similarly "white (thing)" by imposition signifies a corporeal thing, ... , while signifying the whiteness by representation, as a principal cause', i.e. the whiteness is the main cause of the thing's being white. By contrast, Aristotle says, in the corresponding passage, that '(a) white (thing)' does not signify other than the quality, and Boethius expresses his agreement with that.

This strategy of treating the names both of substance and of accident similarly seems to me crucial, and it is just this point that Anselm rejects in his *De grammatico*, as we shall see later.

What I would like to point out here is first that, in the *Glosule*, *significatio*, or *nominatio*, is the function of a name in relation to things based on its imposition. It does not refer to any understanding in the hearer or the speaker, at least not explicitly, in order to explain the signification, nor does the other aspect, defined as *determinare qualitatem*. The *Glosule* shows the aspect as a name's function of referring to more general things in the genus-species order of a category.

Secondly, the Aristotelian theory of category is dominant in grammar (as we have already seen in the case of Alcuin): i.e., the way of thinking in the *Glosule* is quite near to that of the *Categoriae* and its interpretation by Boethius. That is, the *De Interpretatione* does not have a role in understanding the *significatio*.

1.3 *Vox articulata in the Glosule*

One thing, however, seems to contradict these conclusions: the *Glosule* explains *vox articulata* with reference to the *sensus* or *intellectus* in the speaker's mind.¹³ The concluding explanation concerning the definition of Priscian¹⁴ in the *Glosule* is as follows:

Articulata est quae profertur cum sensu proferentis idest quae potentialiter apta est proferri ad

¹³ Irene Rosier, Le commentaire des Glosulae et des Glosae de Guillaume de Conches sur le chapitre De Voce des Institutiones Grammaticae de Priscien, in *Cahiers de L'Intitut du Moyen-Age Grec et Latin*, 63(1993),p.115-144. I am grateful to Irene Rosier for suggesting this point to me at the conference.

¹⁴ Prisc. Inst. Gram. I, ed.Keil 5.6-7: 'articulata est, quae coartata, hoc est copulata cum aliquo sensu mentis eius, qui loquitur, profertur.'

sensum proferentis demonstrandum, licet ille cum aliquo sensu non proferat.¹⁵

Both Priscian and the commentator understand this function of an articulate vocal sound as the vocal sound *signifying* some sense (sensus) in the speaker's mind, using the term `significatio', `significare' and `intelligere', and the commentator interprets the *sensus* as *intellectus*¹⁶. Thus in this context the understanding seems to be an object of the signification.

Moreover, the commentator refers to Boethius' commentary on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, and presents the notion of signification taken from the third chapter that a vocal sound is significative (i.e., has a function of signifying) if it produces some understanding in the hearer's mind (in animo auditoris aliquem generat intellectum).¹⁷ He compares it with Priscian's notion that it is significative if it is uttered as a result of the speaker's intention, and his conclusion is that Boethius, in his commentary on chapter 2 of the *De Interpretatione*, accepts *vox naturalis* as significative from the point of view of the hearer,¹⁸ while Priscian does not, i.e., he excludes it from articulate vocal sounds from the point of view of the speaker. Thus the *Glosule* shows a quite sophisticated consideration of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* by combining Boethius' commentary on chapter 3 with chapter 2. Its author seems to have been very interested in the *De Interpretatione* and consequently to have received some influence from it.

Against the preceding points, however, I would argue as follows. First, in the preceding quotation, the commentator revises Priscian by inserting the possibility, i.e., `potentialiter apta est proferri' instead of `profertur', so that `articulata' includes the case of someone speaking some word `without signifying any understanding (sine aliquo intellectu significandi)', when the person does not understand, but only utters, the word. For it is *articulata* even in such a case, since the word has received the imposition of signifying (postquam impositionem significandi recepit). The *impositio*, however, presumably has the same meaning as we referred to concerning the property of a name, i.e., *impositio* is an act of setting the *nominatio*, the relationship between a type of vocal sounds and some thing(s). Consequently the object of signification in `the imposition of signifying' is presumably some thing(s), and not some understandings.

Again, Priscian says in reference to the subspecies of vocal sound which is *articulata* but *illiterata*, `sensum aliquem significant'. Nevertheless the commentator interprets this as follows.

Nota quia sibilus est vox articulata si ille qui profert illum auditori intendat *aliquid* per ipsum *significare*, ut latrones in nemoribus se solent per sibilum convocare. Similiter gemitus, screatus, si *ad aliquid significandum* proferantur articulati sunt.

In this context `aliquid' may not be an understanding in the speaker's mind. For one may presume

¹⁵ Rosier, *art. cit.*, p.129.

¹⁶ *Id., ibid.*, p.128-129. Prisc., *op. cit.*, 5,10-15.

¹⁷ *Id., ibid.*, p.129. cf. Boethius, *In librum Aristotelis Peri Hermeneias commentarii* II, ed. Meiser, 1880, p.72:12 sq.

¹⁸ Boethius, *op. cit.*, p.54:16 sq., p.59:4 sq.

that the commentator uses 'significatio' in its function of designating an understanding in the speaker's mind according to the usage of Priscian in the corresponding passages, but the commentator is inclined to use the term in its usual usage, which means the function of referring to some thing.

As to the reference to Boethius, what the *Glosule* does is to differentiate Priscian's theory from Boethius', rather than to use the latter for interpreting the former. When the commentator explains that Boethius' signification is in the context of the hearer's understanding, while Priscian's is in the context of the speaker's, it recognizes some similarity between them, but it uses *De Interpretatione* to make a contrast between the two, not to give one support from the other. Thus it is not appropriate to conclude that the *Glosule* is influenced by the tradition of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*.

On these grounds, I think I can maintain the preceding conclusions. In the following sections we shall see explicit contrasts to these points both in Anselm and in Abelard.

2. Anselm and God's speaking

2.1 God's speaking and mental words

Anselm's theory of words involves the notion of God's speaking without vocal signs, this notion being the basis of the entire system of his philosophy of language. First, I shall analyse the famous passages in the *Monologion*, chapters 9 and 10, in which Anselm considers the traditional Christian concept of *creatio ex nihilo*. He asks himself 'in what respect can those things which have been made be said to have been nothing before they were made', and concludes that 'they were not nothing with respect to the reason of their maker' (quantum ad rationem facientis), for in Him 'a form or likeness or rule' of the thing to be made must have existed beforehand.¹⁹ As to those forms of things (formae rerum) he goes on to say, 'what else were they than a kind of speaking of the things in <the maker's> reason' (rerum quaedam in ipsa ratione locutio). He compares it with a craftsman's 'mental conception' (conceptio mentis), by which he 'speaks inwardly in himself' (intra se dicit) of the work he is going to make.²⁰

After introducing the notion of speaking, or locution, in the reason, Anselm goes on to distinguish this mental speech from the case in which 'vocal sounds that have the function of signifying things are thought' (voces rerum significativae cogitantur), and it is in such a context that he shows his basic philosophy of language.²¹ His way of explaining the nature of language can be summarized as follows.

¹⁹ Anselmus, *Monologion*, cap.9, ed.Schimitt, I,p.24:12-20.

²⁰ *Id.*, *ibid.*, cap.10. p.24:24-27.

²¹ *Id.*, *ibid.*, p.24:27-29.

1. Anselm distinguishes three types of locution in human beings: (1) by using sensible signs sensibly; (2) by thinking the same sensible signs, but not sensibly; and (3) by speaking inwardly in our mind of the things themselves without using any sensible signs. The third type is, in turn, divided into two subspecies (a) by imagining things' external figures and (b) by understanding their essential structures according to reason. Of these three he explains God's speaking as most similar to the third type of speaking.

Frequenti namque usu cognoscitur, quia rem unam tripliciter loqui possumus. Aut enim *res loquimur* (1) *signis sensibilibus*, id est quae sensibus corporeis sentiri possunt, *sensibiliter utendo*; aut (2) *eadem signa*, quae foris sensibilis sunt, *intra nos insensibiliter cogitando*; aut (3) nec sensibiliter nec insensibiliter his signis utendo, sed *res ipsas* vel (a) *corporum imaginatione* vel (b) *rationis intellectu* pro rerum ipsarum diversitate *intus in nostra mente dicendo*.²²

The first type corresponds to our usual utterance, the second to our silent speaking within ourselves without external utterance, although we still use vocal signs, and the third to our mental thinking of things without using vocal signs at all, i.e. imagining their figures or purely thinking of the things by reason, viz., of a man as a rational mortal animal.²³ Though I myself cannot agree with Anselm as to the description of the third type, for it seems to me impossible to think of, for instance, man as a rational mortal animal without using vocal language at least silently, nevertheless Anselm insists on this in order to point out some similarity between human speaking and that of God, which cannot be a vocal one.

Anselm goes on to identify the third type with the mental passions (*passiones animae*) in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, chap.1., according to Boethius' interpretation of it, though Anselm himself does not use the word '*passiones animae*'. According to Boethius, vocal sounds signify understandings, which are mental passions and are likenesses (*similitudines*) of things. From a vocal sound signifying an understanding, it follows that the vocal sound is a sign of the understanding, and consequently, being evidently sensible, it is the *signum sensibile* as Anselm defines it.²⁴

He also explains the third type of locution not only as a '*similitudo*' of things, but also as '*naturalis*' (*naturalis*) and '*apud omnes gentes eadem*'. This explanation is based on Boethius' commentary as well.²⁵

As to subspecies (a) of the third type, Boethius does not mention *imaginatio* in his *Prima editio*, but he devotes considerable attention to it in the *Secunda editio*. There he seems to conclude

²² *Id., ibid.*, p.24:29-30:4.

²³ *Id., ibid.*, p.25:4-9.

²⁴ *Id., ibid.*, p.25:10-27.

that *imaginatio* is a mental passion, but it is the *intellectus*, and not *imaginatio*, that names, verbs, and sentences mainly signify.²⁶ Correspondingly Anselm's theory of signification involves the relationship between vocal sounds and understandings, as shown in the following, but ignores imaginations, i.e., the subspecies (a) plays no role in the theory.

Anselm, on the other hand, diverges from Aristotle and Boethius in that he describes these concepts as words, while they do not. A mental word is not a sign, but a likeness of a thing. As a result, Anselm would admit that signification is not a necessary function for every kind of word.

Thus, though depending on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* and Boethius' commentary to it, Anselm revises it to make it consistent with the Christian tradition, i.e., by taking mental concepts as mental words and making some correspondence between them and God's words, or Word.²⁷ What Anselm adds here is nothing than the Augustinian concept of God's Word.

2. Vocal sounds are said to be *signa sensibilia* in the sense that they are the signs of mental concepts, so that *significatio* exists in the relationship between *vox* and mental word.

Anselm understands this sign-relationship in the context both of speaking and of hearing. In the *Monologion*, he introduces the relationship in distinguishing the three types of speaking, and thus sensible signs are described as the speaker's expression of mental thinking. Anselm, however, understands the signification also in the context that when a hearer hears a *vox* and understands something, it is the act of the *vox*' signifying this something, as we shall see later in reference to *De grammatico*.

What, then, is the status of this something signified? Is it something understood in the mind, or something extra-mental towards which the act of understanding is directed?

In explaining the first type of locution, Anselm says, 'when I signify him (i.e. the man I talked of) by this name `man"... '(cum eum hoc nomine, quod est `homo', significo...). That is, according to Anselm, I am able to think of the man without any sensible signs (i.e. the third type of locution), and then I use the sign `man' to express my thinking. Thus, first the name should be a sign of the thought in my mind, i.e. the name should be said to signify the thought. Then, when I have the thought in my mind, I am thinking of the thing (man) of which the thought is said to be a likeness, so that it is justifiable to say, 'I signify the man by this name'. In fact, Boethius says both that 'by vocal sounds we signify the thing we grasp by understanding' (voces quibus id quod intellectu capimus significamus), and that 'vocal sounds signify understandings'.²⁸ Anselm says, however, in such a case that the name signifies the thing, or by the name one signifies it, but seems not to say that the name signifies the mental concept, though he admits that the name is a sensible sign of the

²⁵ Boethius, *Com. in libr. Aristot. Perihermeneias, Prima editio*, ed.C.Meiser, p.37s.

²⁶ *Id.*, *Com. in libr. Aristot. Perihermeneias, Secunda editio*, ed.C.Meiser, p.27-43.

²⁷ As to 'words, or Word', see Anselm, *ibid.*, cap.12. p.26:28; cap.30. p.48:8-12.

mental concept.

Anselm's notion of signification is remarkable when one contrasts it with the grammatical notion at that time and in preceding periods. Although the anonymous *Glosule* had expressed already the idea that a *vox articulata* signified a mental understanding, as we have seen above, it did not apply the idea to the theory of name and its signification, which involved exclusively the relationship between *vox* and *res*, not that between *vox* and *intellectus*, nor *vox* and *res* mediated by the *intellectus*. The *Glosule* also did not base itself on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, but exclusively on the *Categoriae*. By contrast, Anselm uses the idea that a *vox* is a sensible sign of a mental concept in considering the signification of a vocal word, e.g., what a name signifies, basing himself on *De Interpretatione*, as well as on the Augustinian theory of word.

3. Though Anselm begins his consideration of God's speaking by assimilating it to human mental language, nevertheless he later claims that the former is definitely different from the latter. For God's Word is not a likeness of created things, but the true and simple *essentia* of them, while the real things are only imitations of His Word as *principalis essentia*.

Satis itaque manifestum est in verbo, per quod facta sunt omnia, non esse ipsorum similitudinem, sed veram simplicemque essentiam; in factis vero non esse simplicem absolutamque essentiam. sed vere illius essentiae vix aliquam imitationem.

Verbum autem quo creaturam dicit, nequaquam similiter est verbum creaturae, quia non est eius similitudo, sed principalis essentia.²⁹

When Anselm accepts God's Word as the *principalis essentia* of created things, he means that it is the eternal origin from which the things have come into their present state. In other words, all created things are *essentia mutabilis* in themselves, but are the *prima essentia* in God.³⁰ Here Anselm uses John 1,3-4: 'Quod factum est, in illo vita est', as the background of his explanation.³¹

In this context Anselm uses the word '*essentia*' according to his basic conception of it, which can be seen in his comment on its usage by comparing *essentia - esse - ens* with *lux-lucere-lucens*.³² That is, *lux* (light) is the origin from which the act *lucere* (to light) comes forth, *lucere* is the act itself, and *lucens* is the thing that is doing the act of *lucere*. Similarly *essentia* can be accepted as the origin of the act *esse*, to be or to exist, while *ens* is the thing that is doing the act of being or existing. Thus, in one context, the thing itself can be called *essentia*, for it is in a sense the origin of its act of existing, nevertheless in another context not an individual being, but some universal being can better be called *essentia*, and in yet another context, such as the present passage, not a created

²⁸ *Id.*, *Prima editio*, p.37:9,38:17.

²⁹ Anselmus, *op. cit.*, cap. 31, 50:7-9. *ibid.*, cap.33, 53.4-6.

³⁰ *Id.*, *ibid.*, cap.34, 53.25-54.1.

³¹ e.g., *Id.*, *ibid.*, cap.35, 54.8-10.

³² *Id.*, *ibid.*, cap.6, 20.13-16.

thing but one on the side of the creator should be called the *essentia* of the created thing. In these contexts '*essentia*' as a predicate may take its singular form while the subject term takes a plural form as we have seen in the preceding paragraph. Thus, we can understand Anselm's explanation in the preceding passage in terms of the basic usage of *essentia*, i.e., that from which the act *esse* comes forth.

In sum, Anselm takes the God's Word as the *essentia* of created things and insists that it is absolutely different from the human mental word. In this respect Anselm should be said to have begun his explanation of God's Word by assimilating it to the human mental word, but to conclude it by negating that similarity. This way of thinking, however, can be understood as a characteristic of Anselm's logical investigation into the nature of God. Often he starts with the ordinary notion of God, which can easily be understood by us human beings, and then through the process of his investigation by reason, he goes beyond the ordinary understanding. For instance, he starts with the notion of God's omnipresence, i.e., that He is in every place and every time, and asks whether His total being is in every place and time, or some part of Him is in every place and time. The latter means, for instance, that a part of Him is in one place, another part is in another place and thus in any place some part of Him is present. Through meditation he rejects this idea and reaches the conclusion that the total being of God is simultaneously in every place and time. This means that His existence is beyond place and time and, consequently, He should be said to be in no place or time.³³ In reaching this conclusion, however, Anselm never rejects his starting thesis, but rather surpasses it.

Thus Anselm's way of logical thinking leads him by reason beyond his former conclusion by reason. His way of surpassing his starting notion of God's Word should also be understood in a similar way.

2.2 *significatio and appellatio*

Now, let us consider again what is the object of signification. First, a type of vocal sound, e.g., a common name, is said to be a sensible sign of a mental conception, so that the vocal type signifies the mental conception. Secondly, the mental conception is a likeness of real things, which are again imitations of the true *essentia*, or God's Word. Thus it is possible to say that the vocal type signifies the real thing of which the conception is a likeness, as I mentioned above, or maybe that it signifies the *essentia*.

To consider this point, let us examine Anselm's *De grammatico*, in which he explores the question, '*Quomodo grammaticus sit substantia et qualitas*'.

We have seen an answer from the side of grammarians in the preceding section. On the other

³³ *ibid.*, cap.21, 36-38.

hand, Aristotle's main answer is: 'qualitas, ut album, grammaticum'.³⁴ Boethius thinks differently: that *albedo* is a quality, but *album* is not.³⁵

Anselm answers the question by distinguishing between *significatio per se* and *significatio per aliud*, and between *significatio* and *appellatio*. First, 'grammaticus' signifies by itself (*per se*) grammar, while signifying by some other thing (*per aliud*) a man.

Grammaticus vero non significat hominem et grammaticam ut unum, sed *grammaticam per se et hominem per aliud significat*.

hoc nomen quamvis sit *appellativum hominis*, non tamen proprie dicitur eius significativum; et licet sit *significativum grammaticae*, non tamen est eius appellativum.

Appellativum autem nomen cuiuslibet rei nunc dico, *quo res ipsa usu loquendi appellatur*. Nullo enim usu loquendi dicitur: grammatica est grammaticus, aut: grammaticus est grammatica; sed: homo est grammaticus, et grammaticus homo.³⁶

The difference is explained thus: when I hear 'white (thing)', I understand whiteness, so that what a hearer understands by a name alone is what the name signifies *per se*. On the other hand, when I understand whiteness by the word 'white', I happen to have the further information that a certain horse has this whiteness, and consequently I understand the horse as well by 'white'. Thus what a hearer understands by a name mediated by some other information is what the name signifies *per aliud*.

*intellecta albedine per hoc nomen [quod est 'albus'], intelligo equum per hoc quod albedinem scio esse in equo, id est per aliud quam per nomen albi, quo tamen equus appellatur.*³⁷

As to the question of the object of signification, the object of understanding is said to be the object of signification in both cases, i.e. signification *per se* as well as *per aliud*.

As to *appellatio* and *significatio*, Anselm distinguishes them in such a way that he leaves *appellatio* as a term's function of referring to things in speech, while taking *significatio* from the grammarians' terminology and using it only as a dialectical term. I say 'dialectical term', because Anselm definitely uses *significatio* in terms of *intellectus* throughout the *De grammatico*, on the basis of the idea he derives from Aristotle's *De interpretatione* combined with the Augustinian conception of mental words, as shown above.

It should be noted that *appellatio* is not identical with *significatio per aliud*, although in the case of 'grammaticus' the object of *appellatio* as well as that of *significatio per aliud* is a man.³⁸

³⁴ Aristoteles, *Categoriae*, 4, 1b29, Boethius, *In categ. Aristot.*, PL64, 180A.

³⁵ Boethius, *op. cit.*, 239C.

³⁶ Anselmus, *De grammatico*, [12], p.157:1-3.

³⁷ *Id., ibid.*, [14], p.160:26-161:4.

³⁸ D.P. Henry identifies *appellatio* with *significatio per aliud*. cf. Henry, *Commentary on De Grammatico*, 1974, p.203-205, 207, etc. Furthermore, he seems to identify *appellatio* also with *nominatio*, agreeing with De Rijk; but my conclusion is different. I would, however, agree with De Rijk concerning the basic notion of the *appellatio*, i.e., his first connotation, the use of the term in a

For *appellatio* is not an act based on one's understanding of the name. Rather *appellatio* is presented in the *De grammatico* with the notion of *usus loquendi*, i.e., the usual way of speaking. It is a function of a term performed not by itself, but combined with other elements of speech. Anselm even mentions the case, 'every substance seems to signify this something' (*omnis substantia videtur significare hoc aliquid*), in which the subject, 'every substance', refers to (appellat) 'every vocal sound that signifies a substance' (*omnis vox significans substantiam*), though the subject signifies substances.³⁹ This function of referring in a speech is *appellatio*, and thus differs from the signification, which is, whether it is *per se* or *per aliud*, the function in relation to the user's understanding.

Consequently *appellatio* is also different from *nominatio*, for the latter is, as we examined above, a function treated by grammarians at the time, and is a relationship between the name and its subjects established by *impositio* or *inventio*. Thus *nominatio* exists even when I do not understand it nor make any speeches involving it.

Basing himself on the same theory of signification and appellation, Anselm explains concerning the name of substance that the name 'man' by itself and as one object signifies those things of which the total man is composed (*per se et ut unum significat ea ex quibus constat totus homo*), i.e., the substance and special differences. Thus though all of them combined as one total entity (*omnia simul velut unum totum*) are called 'man' under one signification, this name is basically significative and appellative of the substance (*principaliter hoc nomen est significativum et appellativum substantiae*), so that it is correctly said that a substance is a man, but not that a rationality is a man.⁴⁰ The signification of the total man is involved in Anselm's theory of vocal sound as a sign of a mental concept. For he refers to the two subspecies of the third type of locution, of which subspecies (b) is explained as the case 'when one thinks of its universal *essentia*, which is a rational mortal animal'.⁴¹

We can, however, ask further whether the thing signified by 'man' is an individual or a universal? To answer the question, I shall refer to some passages in *Monologion*, cap.27.⁴² There Anselm considers first and second substance. 'A substance as universal being is common to plural substances as their *essentia* (*esse universalis, quae pluribus substantiis essentialiter communis est*), e.g., being a man is common to singular men'. On the other hand, 'a substance as individual being has a common universal *essentia* with other substances (*esse individua, quae universalem essentiam comunem habet cum aliis*), in such a way as singular men have a common *essentia* with others, that they are men'. What, then, is the object signified by 'man': an *essentia*

proposition, fits Anselm's theory. See, De Rijk, *op.cit.*, II-1, 1967, p.558-561.

³⁹ *Id., ibid.*, [18], p.163:26-164:2.

⁴⁰ *Id., ibid.*, [12], p.156:26-157:1.

⁴¹ *Id., Monologion*, cap.10, p.25:9.

common to individual men, or an individual substance that has this universal *essentia*? According to his theory of signification, what is understood by 'man' is a rational mortal animal, which seems to be a universal *essentia*. Anselm, however, identifies the object of signification with the object of *appellatio*, which is an individual, though not any particular individual.

Here we are involved with the theory of universals. When I hear 'man', I understand an individual man whose characteristics are defined only as rational mortal animal, so that I do not understand anyone in particular. So far we can say both that 'man' signifies a universal being and that 'man' signifies an individual. Thus what I understand by 'man' is just a man, to whom I refer by the word 'man', when I generally refer to a man in speech. This is the way Anselm distinguishes the *significatio* from the *appellatio*.

In addition, that Anselm considers signification of a *vocal* word is seen in his famous argument for the existence of God.⁴³ That is, he begins by defining God as 'something than which nothing greater can be thought' and points out that even a person who denies God's existence understands the definition when he hears it, so that it exists at least in his understanding. Thus that which the definition signifies becomes the subject in question. Especially, Anselm's claim, especially, that 'what exists at least in understanding can be thought really to exist as well' (*Si vel in solo intellectu est, potest cogitari esse et in re*) is remarkable with reference to his theory of understanding. I shall analyse this subject elsewhere.

3. Abelard on the forms of things in God before Creation

Now let us go on to examine Abelard's theory. Since I have described at length elsewhere my conclusions concerning his theory of signification elsewhere,⁴⁴ which is bound up with his progression of the theory of universals, I will only summarize them briefly here and then focus my attention on his view of God's speaking.

3.1 Progression in Abelard's Theory of Signification

In *Glosse super Porphyrium* (*Ingredientibus*) we can distinguish two stages in Abelard's evolution of his theory in the present respect. The first stage is expressed in the vocalist definition of a universal.⁴⁵ Here Abelard receives the idea of *impositio* and *nominatio* from previously

⁴² *Id., ibid.*, cap. 27, p. 45: 6-12.

⁴³ *Id., Proslogion*, cap. 2, p. 101: 7-17.

⁴⁴ SHIMIZU Tetsuro, *From Vocalism to Nominalism: Progression in Abelard's Theory of Signification*, in *Didascalica*, 1, 15-46.

⁴⁵ Abaelardus, *Glossae super Porphy.*, (LI) hrsg. von B. Geyer, *Peter Abaelards philosophische Schriften I*, 1933: p. 16: 25-30.

existing vocalism and formalizes it as an interpretation of Aristotle's definition of universals.

Abelard, however, goes on to show the difficulties of vocalism, of which he points to two: the first concerns *nominatio*, or *significatio* in the broader sense, while the second concerns the *intellectus* that a name produces in the hearer, this being regarded as *significatio* in the strict sense.

The second stage is Abelard's revision of vocalism in the same text, which is motivated by these difficulties that he describes. Basing himself on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, he introduces the two kinds of signification: *significatio intellectus* and *significatio rerum*, the latter of which is mediated by the former, i.e., the act of signifying things through the medium of *intellectus*. Nevertheless, in this stage *significatio* is still a temporary act in that it exists only when someone utters a *vox* and someone else hears it, and he retains the theory of *nominatio* alongside that of *significatio rerum*. That is, *nominatio* is distinguished from *significatio rerum* in the strict sense.

Then, the third and final stage is found in *Glossule super Porphyrium* (*Nostrorum petitioni sociorum*). Here Abelard's definition of a universal is again based on Aristotle's; nevertheless it is different from that in the *Glosse sup. Por. `Ingr.`* not only in that now it is a *sermo*, and not a *vox*, that is a universal, but also in that the *sermo* has been established with respect to *intellectus* here, while in the *Glosse sup. Por. `Ingr.`* a *nomen* had been imposed, or invented, with respect to things. Also, words and their signification are no longer temporary. Thus Abelard's theory in the third stage deserves to be called 'nominalism', in order to distinguish it from the vocalism of the first and second stages.

3.2 formae rerum in mente divina

Now we come to the last point of the present article. On one occasion, Priscian claims, concerning 'general and special forms of things', that they 'had existed in the divine mind in an intelligible mode before they came forth into corporeal beings':

quantum ad generales et speciales formas rerum, quae in mente divina intellegibiliter constiterunt antequam in corpora prodirent.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, the *Glosule* on Priscian does not comment on this passage. But Abelard quotes this passage on the one hand in the *Glosse sup. Por. `Ingr.`* approvingly to show that the form towards which the understanding in the mind is directed can be said to be the object of signification,⁴⁷ on the other hand, later, in the *Glossule `Nost. pet. soc.`* to introduce the theory that it is *intellectus* that is a universal; a theory he never subscribes to.⁴⁸ Although Abelard refers to such an idea as forms in the divine mind, he never thinks of the realm of words without vocal sounds, even in the third stage referred to above, when he has changed his theory and begins to insist that a *sermo*, and not

⁴⁶ Priscianus, *op.cit.*, Liber XVII,c.44., III,p.135.

⁴⁷ Abaelardus, *ibid.*, p.22:28-34.

⁴⁸ Abaelardus, *Glosule super Porphy.* (LNPS) Geyer, *op.cit.*,II,1973:513,15-19.

vox, is a universal, or when he claims that the *sermo* exists even when no one utters it:

... sciendum est genera et species nullo loquente non minus esse. Cum enim dico: genus vel species est, ipsis nihil attribuo, sed institutionem iam factam, ... , ostendo.⁴⁹

For him, a *sermo* exists in the sense that the relationship between *sermo* and *intellectus* has been established, i.e., the fact of this establishment exists even when the *sermo* is not actually being uttered. Thus a *sermo* is a vocal entity, nevertheless its existence is independent of the vocal entity. An *intellectus*, the thing signified by a *sermo*, also seems to exist independently of someone's actual act of understanding according to Abelard's third stage. He does not, however, take the *intellectus* as a word in any sense.

Again, although Abelard admits the existence of forms in God's mind before creation, they are never some sort of words. Thus he seems to lack a theory of creation by God's speaking.

One may, however, ask how he could believe that forms existed in God's mind before creation. To answer this question, let us examine his interpretation of God's Word in his theological works in that period.

3.3 God's speaking in Abelard's theological works

According to Mews, the *Theologia `Summi boni` (TSum)* was written after the *Glosse sup. Por. `Ingr.`* and before the *Glosse super Perihermeneias*, and the *Theologia Christiana (TChr)* almost simultaneously with the *Glossule `Nost. pet. soc.`*,⁵⁰ so that it may be useful to examine these theological texts in regard to his notion of God's speaking.

Abelard refers to God's speaking in these texts especially with reference to the biblical passages, e.g., Genesis 1,3 : `God said, Let there be light; and there was light.⁵¹

In *TSum*, Abelard admits that the word God speaks is not the transient word that can be heard, but an intelligible and permanent word, and that it is *sapientia* that is called *verbum* (I,14,29). So far, he seems to agree with Augustine's theory in admitting intelligible words, and to contradict his theory in the *Glosse sup. Por. `Ingr.`*, but he does not offer any further interpretation.

By contrast, the *TChr* adds new ideas to the formulation in *TSum*:

Verbum itaque sapientia uocatur, *translato scilicet de effectu ad causam vocabulo* (I,16)

Unde Moyses,..., cum diuersis rerum creationibus faciendis praemittit Dixit Deus, et ad dictum statim effectum adiungit dicans: et factum est ita, cuncta Deum condidisse in Verbo, hoc est in

⁴⁹ *Id., ibid.*, 524.21-24.

⁵⁰ Constant Mews, On Dating the Works of Peter Abelard, in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge*, 52 (1985), p.73-134. I cite *TSum*, *TChr* and *Theologia `Scholarium`* according to Mew's edition, in *Corpus Christianorum*. See also John Marenbon, *The philosophy of Peter Abelard*, Cambridge, 1997, especially Capters 2 and 3, where he discusses the relationship between Abelard's logical and theological works in detail.

⁵¹ Gen.1,3: Dixit Deus: Fiat lux. Et facta est lux. Gen.1,6-7: Dixit Deus ... et factum est ita. Ps.32,6: Verbo Domini caeli firmati sunt ... Ps.32,9: Dixit et facta sunt.

sapientia sua ostendit, Qui etiam hoc Verbum alibi apertius demonstrans non esse verbum audibile et transitorium sed intelligibile ac permanens ... (I,18)

Ne mireris si ... ipse quoque *conceptus mentis* `verbum' dicatur, *translato de effectu ad causam vocabulo*, cum e converso de causa ad effectum.Licet etiam ipsum nostrae mentis conceptum ipsius sermonis tam effectum quam causam ponere, in proferente quidem causam, in audiente effectum, quia et sermo ipse loquentis ab eius intellectu proficiscens generatur, ut eundem rursus in auditore generet intellectum. Pro hanc itaque maxima sermonum et intellectuum cognatione non indecenter in eorum nominibus mutuas fieri licet *translationes*. (I,23)

In these passages, Abelard explicitly claims what one may call a `translatio-theory', that is, when a mental conception is called a `word', it is not in accordance with the proper meaning of `word', but in its transferred/metaphorical meaning (*translato vocabulo*).⁵² That is, from the speaker's point of view, an understanding is the cause of a word uttered, while from the hearer's point of view, the former is the effect of the latter. Now it often happens that a name of a cause is applied to its effect, or a name of an effect to its cause: this kind of application of words is called `translatio'. Thus it is by *translatio* that the name `word' can be applied to understandings, which are causes, or effects, of words. By this interpretation he can maintain his theory in the *Glossule* `Nost. pet. soc.', and can admit the existence of forms in the mind of God before creation without conceding them to be God's words, or Word.

It is noticeable that such an interpretation based on the *translatio*-theory is not found in his later *Theologia* `Scholarium' (I,59-63,87). This fact might mean that he has abandoned his former theory, but I cannot yet explain the significance of this.

Conclusions

We have seen how the theory of God's speaking was related to the concept of word, and to the theory of signification. Alcuin ignored God's speaking and without hesitation showed a simple theory of signification between types of vocal sound and things.

Anselm, deeply concerned with God's speaking, accepted understandings as human mental words, which are likenesses of things, and of which vocal sounds are sensible signs, so that a type of vocal sound signifies things, while God's Word is not a likeness of things, but the principal *essentia* of them.

Abelard, in turn, accepted signification as an act of producing understanding in the hearer's mind, so that a vocal word at first signifies an understanding, which is directed toward things.

⁵² Irene Rosier discussed Abelard's theory of the *translatio* in depth at the conference. See her paper in this book.

Nevertheless, this understanding or concept is not a word of any kind, nor is God's Word properly called 'a word', but only metaphorically. Thus he maintains the existence of the forms of things in God's mind before creation without accepting them as words or Word.

Such a relationship between the theory of words and that of God's speaking seems to exist after this period as well. We can find an example of it in Ockham's thought. This fourteenth-century nominalist presumably thinks of himself as, so to speak, a disciple of Anselm. Like Anselm, he says that mental concepts are principally words, but goes beyond Anselm in insisting that they are signs of things, i.e. they primarily signify things, while vocal words, being subordinate to concepts, signify the same things only in a secondary way. Again, Ockham rejects any forms in God's mind before creation, but claims that, before creation, God directly saw the future existence of each thing in its individuality, so that no forms were needed for Him. It would belong to another paper, however, to analyse the history of the present subject from Abelard to Ockham.⁵³

⁵³ I deeply appreciate William Friert for his help in preparing the English draft to be read at the conference and Charles Burnett for his detailed comments on the final draft. Constant Mews also gave me some important suggestions.