In definition, Anselm finds a method of argument both convenient to this purposes and apparently very satisfying to him. When he and his pupil begin on the task Anselm sets himself in the three treatises pertinentes ad studium sacrae scripturae (the De Veritate, the De Libertate Arbitrii, the De Casu Diaboli), they discover that when Anselm discussed veritas in the Monologion, he did not establish a definition of 'truth':

Non memimi me invenisse definitionem veritatis. In the chapters of the De Veritate which follow, they work out the definition of veritas on which so much of Anselm's argument in the 'three treatises' comes to depend.

In the process of working out his chain of definitions — for that is what the sequence of discussion generates — Anselm displays a range of definitional techniques. Yet his variety falls far short of the number to be found in the most detailed collections of technical devices which were put together in post-classical times. He does not seem to have been aware of the existence of an 'art of definition' in quite the same way, or to the same extent, as he was conscious of the precision of method required in syllogistic argumentation for example. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he had simply not been able to read more than a limited number of the early works which set out theories of definition. It is even possible that 'definition' was a technique not especially interesting to his contemporaries as a matter for discussion and analysis in its own right — in other words, that the dialectical theorists had not yet taken up 'definition' as

1. S I.173.2. (S = F.S.Schmitt Anselmi Opera, (Edinburgh, 1938-61, 6 vols.))
a lively technical issue. It is worthy of remark that Garlandus Compotista does not make a point of discussing definition in his *Dialectica*.

The textbooks in which Anselm and his contemporaries might have found basic teaching on definition include Cicero’s *De Invenzione* and the *Topics*, the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Boethius on Cicero’s *Topics*, on the *De Interpretatione* and Victorinus’ work, the *De Definitione*, on which Cassiodorus and Isidore base their remarks on definition.

In the classical rhetorical works, Anselm would have discovered rough guidelines and simple main principles of definition: he would have been instructed to make a brief, clear statement of the matter in hand in such a way that it would be generally understood, and to sharpen his definition and show its applicability to the issue by such techniques as enumeration of parts and analysis into genus and species. Quintilian, as we might expect, goes more deeply into the complexities of rhetorical definition than do either of the earlier classical rhetorical authors. In general, he contents himself with expanding what Cicero has to say, but in one important respect he disagrees with him. Cicero, he tells us, says that definition is concerned with showing the identity and the difference, that is, with what the thing defined has in common with others, and what are the differences which make it individual. For himself, Quintilian prefers the view that there are three types or species of definition — that which establishes whether a particular term is applicable to a given thing (*an hoc sit*), that which decides which of two terms is to be applied (*hoc an hoc*) and that which decides whether two apparently different things should be called by the same name (*hoc et hoc*). Of these, perhaps the third comes closest to Anselm’s concerns in the ‘three treatises’, but in general, it is not on Quintilian that we should expect to find him model-

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3. A work surviving from the post-Carolingian period at St. Gall, in Ms. Vind. Pal. Lat. 2508, Vienna Oesterreichische Nationalbibliothek, is discussed by L. M. de Rijk. It is ‘a rather extensive discussion on the moods of definition’ based, it seems, not on Cassiodorus or Isidore, nor on Victorinus, but on Boethius’ remarks on Victorinus. See On the Curriculum of the Arts of the Trivium at St. Gall from c.850-c.1000, in *Vivarium* I (1963) p. 57-64.

4. *Topics* V.28; cf. Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* VII.iii.8-10.
ling his own techniques of definition. He is very much concerned with the Ciceronian method of enumeration and analysis, however, and it seems reasonable to assume that Anselm’s knowledge of definition had its ultimate roots in rhetoric as well as in dialectic. In the passage already quoted, Anselm speaks of ‘finding’ a definition of truth; in the Topics Cicero classifies definition under inventio. Definition, like argument as a whole, may be considered an aspect of the rhetorical art in certain respects.

The post-classical writers on definition gave the art a dialectical twist in keeping with the technical interests of their day. Victorinus’ De Definitione takes up definition where Cicero leaves it in the Topics ⁵.

Cicero says that there are other kinds of definition, which have nothing to do with the purpose of his book ⁶. Victorinus, intrigued, and fortified with a knowledge of the techniques of definition known to Greek rhetoricians, sets out to discover them for himself. Remarking on this passage in his Topica commentary, Boethius says:

\[
\text{hunc locum Victorinus unius voluminis serie aggressus exponere et omnes definitionum differentias enumerare, multas interserit, quae definitiones esse pene ab omnibus reclamantur} \]

He argues cogently against certain of Victorinus’ views on the methods which may be included under the heading of definition. Victorinus, however, is writing for both dialecticians and rhetoricians:

\[
\text{omnis diffinitio, aut rhetorica est oratio, aut dialectica} \]

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⁵. Ed. T. Stangl Tulliana et Mario-Victoriana, Munich, 1888. The editor lists a number of manuscripts of the tenth to twelfth centuries, in which the work is found with textbooks of the logica vetus and the Pseudo-Apuleian Perihermenes (pp. 13-16).

⁶. Topics VI.29.

⁷. PL 64.1098 Boethius may be referring to the lost commentary of Victorinus on Cicero’s Topics. If so, we may take it that Victorinus listed the same modes of definition in this work, since Boethius lists them for us.

He agrees with Cicero in placing definition among the topics of argument, that is the *scientia inveniendi* \(^9\), one of many references to the *Topica*, yet he mentions the *Rhetorica* \(^10\) of Cicero, too. However 'dialectical' his interests, Victorinus remains perhaps a rhetorical commentator, with a primarily rhetorical training behind him, while Boethius reveals himself, in his criticisms of this work of Victorinus', to be a dialectician making an especially dialectical use of the techniques of definition.

A somewhat cut-and-tried definitional procedure evolved. Victorinus lists the four essentials as:

- definitio, approbatio definitionis, deductio definitionis ad speciem, deinde destructio definitionis partis adversae \(^11\).

A twelfth century logical treatise simplifies even further:

- tria requiruntur in unaquaque diffinitione: communio, differentia, proprietas \(^12\).

The difference in emphasis shows clearly how far the dialectical processes of definition came to diverge from the 'rhetorically' inspired. Victorinus bases his remarks on Cicero, who is concerned with the forensic orator's practical need for a technique of definition which will enable him to give his proposed definition a foundation in fact, show how it applies to the case in hand and refute the point of view of his opponent. The logician of the twelfth century sees the essentials of a definition in a process of pointing out the genus and species and individual properties of the thing defined; he is interested in isolating the individual item by its definition, so as to refine its meaning and make it a properly 'controlled' component in a sequence of formal argumentation built out of technically precise terms. Even Victorinus bewails the fact that rhetorical definition is thoroughly unreliable:

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10. E.g. PL 64.902.
11. Stangl p.22.21-5.
Verum haec captiosa, falsa, non certa rhetorum definitione.

A certain tension, or at any rate, an acute awareness of differences, is observable from an early date between dialectical and rhetorical methods of definition — together with a tendency to clarify the formal techniques, to multiply subdivisions and technicalities, to make the method more rigid than Cicero had ever intended, and more formal than it perhaps appears in Anselm’s thought.

Victorinus’ total of fifteen different kinds of definition includes a number drawn from the parts of the Topics which follow the passage on definition, many of which Victorinus is careful to attribute to Cicero. We find definition: \textit{a qualitate, ad verbum, per translationem, per quamdam imaginationem, per laudem, causam tribuens}, together with some of their attendant vices and expanded explanations of what is involved in each method of definition. In writing his commentary, Boethius keeps strictly to the order of the Ciceronian text, and the scope of his own comments is thus to some extent limited by the order of treatment he has chosen. But he finds space in his remarks on Victorinus to give a detailed account of Victorinus’ work, and to criticise it roundly. It is hard to believe that Anselm’s interest would not have been engaged by this attack if he had known both works, and that he would not have formed views of his own on the subject of definition which owed something in clarity and ‘finish’ to a resolution of the disagreements between the two works. The evidence that his own theory of definition has been formed on a consideration of two such technically detailed and exact sources is very slight.

Anselm gives the impression that he has learned what he knows about definition chiefly by example, rather than by study of the ‘theory’ of definition; the examples he would have found in Boethius’ Commentaries on the \textit{De Interpretatione} fit his own practices neatly, as we shall see. Before considering this secondary, less easily-defined, method of ‘influence by example’, we must, however, look at the evidence of correla-

\footnote{13. Stangl. p. 20.14-5.}
tions between the *Topics* of Cicero and Anselm’s methods of definition; here, if anywhere, we may find him drawing directly on a purely theoretical knowledge of definition.

Cicero’s *Topics* deals with certain points in the theory of definition with which Anselm’s definitional methods have something in common. Cicero tells us that a definition is a saying which explains what something is:

\[
\text{Definitio est oratio quae id quod definitur explicat quid sit}^{14}.
\]

This, of course, is Anselm’s overriding aim and purpose in the ‘three treatises’. In discussing ‘truth of meaning’ (*significationis veritas*) he finds that an affirmation is that which signifies that what is, is: *significat esse quod est* \(^{15}\).

He wants to discover a series of definitions which will explain exactly what truth and its fellows are. Cicero distinguishes two chief kinds of definition, the definition of what exists in external reality, and the definition of what exists only in the mind:

\[
\text{unum earum rerum quae sunt, alterum earum quae intelliguntur}^{16}.
\]

Anselm, too, points out a difference between the *rectitudo* of things visible and a *rectitudo* of notions which may be perceived only in the mind:

\[
\text{quod vero sola mente percipi dicitur, separat eam a rectitudine visibili}^{17}.
\]

Cicero explains that definitions are made partly by enumeration (*partitio*) and partly by analysis (*divisio*) \(^{18}\). *Partitio* involves the division of the *res proposita* into its component parts (*quasi in membra discerptitur*) while *divisio* distinguishes genus, species and accidents. In dividing *veritas* into separate aspects, and considering a *veritas in enunciationis, a veritas in cogitatione, a veritas in actione, a veritas in voluntate*, and so on, Anselm may

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be said to be using this technique of refinement and clarification of definition. A technique of definition by divisio is to be found in Anselm, too. In the De Veritate, he says that his definition of truth in Chapter XI contains no more and no less than it should 19; the nomen rectitudinis divides veritas from everything which has no rectitude:

nomen rectitudinis dividit eam ab omni re quae rectitudinem non vocatur 20.

More specifically, later in the same work, we find a reference to division by genus:

Redeamus ad rectitudinem seu veritatem, quibus duobus nominibus, quoniam de rectitudinem mente sola perceptibili loquimur, una res significatur quae genus est iustitiae; et quaeamus an sit una sola veritas in omnibus illis in quibus veritatem dicimus esse, an ita sint veritates plures, sicut plura sunt in quibus constat esse veritatem 21.

Another statement of the principle that a definition should fulfil its task exactly, describing neither too fully nor with insufficient precision, occurs in the De Libertate Arbitrii, where Anselm shows that he considers a finished definition (perfecta definitio) to be one which explains the genus and the specific properties of the thing defined:

Sed cum dicta definitio sic perfecta sit ex genere et differentiis, ut nec minus aliquid claudat, nec plus quam illa quam quae veritatem libertas nihil illi addendum aut demendum intelligi potest 22.

Such common ground of method as there is between Cicero and Anselm might almost be the result of pure chance, so comparatively simple are the procedures involved, yet some common terminology and a well-established habit of tacitly relying on authority where he can find it, suggests that Anselm may in fact

be drawing on his knowledge of the *Topics*, if not on Cassiodorus and Isidore.  

In two further respects, Anselm shows a knowledge of definitional techniques outlined in the classical rhetorical textbooks. Anselm defines by showing what the thing to be defined is not, or by opposing positive and negative statements. The Auctor *ad Herennium* advises the orator to show that the contrary definition to that which he proposes is false, and Cicero, in the *De Inventione*, makes a similar suggestion. Anselm defines by a technique of showing A to be B and B to be C, that is, by showing the likenesses and the common properties of what is to be defined, in a series of related concepts. Again, this method of definition by 'synonym' or by 'similitudo' has its classical rhetorical parallels. All these apparent similarities may be no more than apparent; they do not seem to add up to an altogether convincing case for the view that Anselm's definitional technique depends on the theoretical schemes of the textbooks. The terminological correspondences are not close, except in a few instances of little real significance. Anselm's use of the word *genus* or *divisio*, for example, may have a number of alternative sources.

It seems far more likely that Anselm learned his definitional technique by example, perhaps from Boethius' Commentaries on Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. Anselm tells us on numerous occasions in the 'three treatises' that he is engaged in a definitional exercise, and that he clearly sets out with the conscious intention of formulating a series of definitions. He thus employs a specific technical term — *definitio* — and a procedure — that of constructing a series of related definitions of interrelated terms — in very much Boethius' fashion. In the Commentaries on the *De Interpretatione* Boethius develops a series of definitions of *nomen*, *verbum*, *oratio*, *enuntiatio* in much the same way as Anselm develops his definitions of *veritas*, *rectitudo*, *iustititia*.

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24. S 1.179.22, S 1.181.22, for example.
25. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* II.xii.17.
26. *De Inventione* II.xvii.54.
27. *In Librum Aristotelis* ΙΕΠΙ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΙΑΣ ed. C. Meiser (Leipzig 1877) I p. 51.6-9, and see II p. 53.1-6.
Like Boethius, Anselm is trying to extend and explore every corner of meaning implied in the terms, by a process of subdivision and refinement of definition.

In the first version of the Commentary, Boethius explains that if one says the *nomen* is a *vox*, one draws the definition from the genus:

> quod dixit nomen esse vocem, traxit a genere definitio-

Anselm could well have found here his source of the practice of defining by genus. Boethius remarks that a definition should fit its object precisely, neither exceeding nor falling short of exactness:

> omnem, inquit, definitionem vel contractiorem esse definita specie vel excedere non oportet \(^{28}\).

Here, too, Anselm may have got his own notion. Boethius can be seen to proceed by enumeration and analysis. Beginning with the statement that: *nomen est vox significativa* \(^{29}\), Boethius goes on the show stage by stage what modifications and developments of this statement must be made, until he arrives at this definition:

> nomen est vox significativa secundum placitum sine tempore, cuius nulla pars significativa est separata, definitum aliquid significans, cum est aut non est iuncta faciens enuntiationem \(^{30}\).

In just this way, Anselm moves from a simple statement to a more and more complex definition, from:

> rectitudo mihi videtur idem esse quod iustitia \(^{31}\),

**Beneigiturdiximus iustitiam esse rectitudinem voluntatis servatam propter se, id est quae servatur propter se** \(^{32}\).

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\(^{28}\) *Ibid.* II p. 82.28.

\(^{29}\) *Ibid.* I p. 4.5.


\(^{31}\) S I.191.27-8.

\(^{32}\) S I.196.19-20.
Boethius insists that a definition must be an *oratio*, that is more than a single *nomen* or synonymous term. This is perhaps the point in which he takes issue against Victorinus most energetically. He explains that Victorinus includes the *nomen* among the definitions:

> inter definitiones enim ponit et nomina \(^{33}\),

when Aristotle explicitly excludes it:

> pernegatque in Topicis nomine fieri definitionem \(^{34}\).

Cicero, he adds, says that a definition must be an *oratio*. Anselm himself clearly prefers to define in complete sentences, or at least in whole phrases and clauses, rather than in single words or mere synonyms. The overwhelming impression conveyed by Anselm's exercises in definition, is that he relies heavily on Boethius' example and, perhaps a little, on Cicero's *Topics*. If this is so, definition in Anselm's hands should perhaps be regarded as a Boethian rather than a 'rhetorical' exercise.

Yet this area does not seem to be one in which Anselm depends heavily on a technically exact training — as he must do in syllogistic argumentation. As his use of a variety of different methods shows, Anselm is heir to a long tradition beginning, for the Latin-speaking scholar, with Cicero and the textbooks of classical rhetoric. Definition is an aspect of rhetorical argument as well as of dialectic. In Anselm's use of definition we find another of the fine threads which connect classical rhetorical theory with the actual practice of eleventh century writers.

Bristol  
Gillian R. Evans.

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33. *PL* 64.1098.  