Katherin A. Rogers, *Freedom and Self-Creation: Anselmian Libertarianism*. Oxford: OUP, 2015, 248 pp.

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DOI 10.1515/agph-2017-0006

Freedom and Self-Creation: Anselmian Libertarianism is a sequel to – and to large extent a remake of – the author's earlier *Anselm on Freedom* (Oxford: OUP, 2008). While the latter was mainly a historical study followed by an attempt to translate Anselm's contribution to the problem of free will into the contemporary idiom and, indeed, to establish it as a viable position for today, the new book contains a full blown defense of an Anselm-inspired account of free will set in the current debate on libertarianism (46–64 and 127–238). It is backed by an interpretation of Anselm's views much in the line of that put forward in the first book (65–126) and preceded by a lengthy introduction (1–40). Rogers' method of engaging a conversation between an eleventh-century thinker and contemporary philosophy has been drawing criticism from mediaevalists of a historicist bent ever since she first employed it in *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation* and *The Neoplatonic Metaphysics and Epistemology of Anselm of Canterbury* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1997). Thus, in the eyes of a recent critic, Rogers has "succumbed to the temptation to approach the history of philosophy as if there were perennial questions" with a "stock of possible answers" to them existing in logical space (Thomas Williams, in: NDPR, 2009). Yet despite these strictures, many intellectual historians including the reviewer would be quite happy to say that some of the problems dealt with by thinkers of past ages are actually the same as some that still bother us at present, or at least very similar ones. And this goes for the answers, too: There may well be instances of arguments or theories still alive today in historical figures such as Anselm, although the names by which we are used to calling them are absent. There may be anonymous compatibilists, *incognito* libertarians, Frankfurtians *avant la lettre*, and so on, in the past. There may even be viable pieces of reasoning which for centuries nobody has been thinking of. So it would seem that there is nothing wrong in using contemporary ideas to shed light on Anselm's positions and *vice versa*. As I see it, Rogers' methodology, unusual as it may be, is perfectly respectable as such. Admittedly, it amounts to setting herself an ambitious task, requiring historical, interpretative and analytic skills alike. While Rogers generally leaves no doubt that she exceedingly disposes of all of these, it is perhaps not quite as clear that she lives up to her own standards in all matters of detail. One of her new book's innovations is the introduction, besides Anselm, of a second character, "the Anselmian" (2) – where "Anselm" stands for the historical figure and "the Anselmian" for the philosopher expanding on the historical figure's views, putting "some meat" on the libertarian "bones" provided by Anselm "to produce a somewhat more developed theory" (74), proposing answers "drawn from, or inspired by, Anselm's theory" (3) to the most significant problems raised against libertarianism. Though this is a most helpful move, it will turn out that a review of Rogers' book does well to increase the number of Anselm-related characters to even four: Anselm and the Anselmian, *Ranselm* (Rogers' Anselm, where he does not really match the historical Anselm), as we may call him, and the *Ranselmian* (Rogers' Anselmian where she does not really expand on the historical Anselm). The book features mostly Anselm and the Anselmian. Time and again, however, *Ranselm* and the *Ranselmian* enter the scene, and the parts they play are not always minor ones.

The following focusses on Rogers' interpretation of Anselm as a libertarian; I will therefore not be able to appreciate her many perceptive insights into the free will debate by going into her discussion of topics such as the controller argument for incompatibilism, the defense of structuralism, the (ir)relevance of Frankfurt-style counterexamples, the Luck Problem or the Tracing Problem. I shall first give the outlines of her interpretation of Anselm's theory of free will, briefly comment on what I think we can learn from it, and eventually query a number of points Rogers makes or doesn't make (I am afraid that this final section will be by far the lengthiest).

According to Rogers, Anselm develops a "well-worked out" (1), though at the same time "very basic" (74) theory of libertarian free will meant to provide for moral responsibility. Essential for his libertarianism is the idea that free creatures are able to choose from themselves, with *aseity*, so that they rather than God are the ultimate originators of their acts of will. A choice causally necessitated by factors not ultimately originating from the agent is "determined" (11) and not an *a se* choice. Likewise, if (as in Molinism) the "*actual* agent's *actually* making the *actual* choice" is not the grounding for the truth and the knowledge – human, angelic or divine – about which option is actually chosen, the choice is "externally non-causally necessary" (12) and not *a se*. *Compatibilism* is the thesis that a human choice can be free in a "responsibility-grounding way" (14) even if it is determined or externally non-causally necessitated. Endowed with a libertarian free will, we humans are very "special, responsible sorts of beings" (18), true images of God who has whatever He has from himself. We are able to participate in the creation of our own characters, that is, in the creation of ourselves; we therefore bear responsibility even for choices determined by our character. Unlike God, a creature needs alternate possibilities to be able to choose with aseity. This is why God created the rational creature with a will moved by two rival (though not antagonistic) inclinations, one towards justice and the other towards mere benefits, thereby producing in them a "torn condition" (86) and a necessity to make a choice. The cause of the resulting volition is the agent as a substance. An agent does not need "any new form of causal power" (67) to produce an *a se* choice, and the choice itself does not involve anything apart from the will's God-given inclinations – a view Rogers dubs "parsimonious agent-causation" (2). Hence human free choices do not defeat the principle that God is the creator of everything except Himself. Rogers believes that Anselm's account of free will is "a novel and exciting contribution" (*ibd*.) to the problem, which has nevertheless played almost no role in intellectual history up to the present day, having probably been lost "in the excitement over Aristotle" (*ibd*., fn. 4).

I will explain shortly why I think that the "parsimonious agent causation" account is novel in quite another sense, being, that is, one of the several ideas Rogers reads into Anselm rather than Anselm's own. As to the rest of the story, some of it is only hinted at by Anselm, such as her emphasis on the status of human beings as having been made in the image of God. This is not a frequent theme in Anselm's works; only once does he connect the aseity of the human will to our being "similar to God" (cf. *Cur deus homo* 2, 10). It may still be held that it is Anselmian in spirit. The same holds true for Rogers' repeated talk about character creation, for which there is even less evidence in the texts. But the essence of her Anselm interpretation seems to me basically correct as far as it goes: Anselm is a libertarian of sorts (see below for the qualification) seeking to ground moral responsibility. He takes aseity, i. e. being the ultimate originator of one's volitions, as necessary for "freedom of the will" (though not for what he calls "free decision"). Moreover, he thinks that we need alternate possibilities to make *a se* choices, whereas God does not. Finally, Rogers is quite right to say that for Anselm our will is (sometimes; see below for this qualification) moved by two rival inclinations between which we have to choose, that these two inclinations are not, as the "Kantian" interpretation has it, antagonistically related, and that his is a eudaemonist ethics.

Here are some drawbacks I think I must mention. To begin with, a major problem of Rogers' presentation of Anselmian Libertarianism is that it merely portraits the freedom of those rational creatures possessing *justice (iustitia)* or moral goodness. According to Anselm, those who possess moral goodness can persevere in it through just *(a se)* choices, yet only God can produce moral goodness in a creature who has abandoned or not yet received it. It is all very well to suggest, as Rogers does in *Anselm on Freedom* (= AF), that Anselm *could have said* that God bestows His grace to every human being and not only to a lucky few, without therefore violating the anti-Pelagian constraint of his Augustinianism, or that he even *ought to have said* so given his insistence on God's perfect goodness (cf. AF, 142–145). Yet the fact of the matter is that Anselm did not hold anything of the kind. Indeed, Rogers implicitly seems to assume that God not only (1) bestows His grace on every human being, but that God (2) gracefully restores justice immediately whenever an individual human being has lost it. I cannot see what could justify the latter assumption. Even more than the first one, this second claim is a far cry from Anselm's theology. It may be argued that the first claim is Anselmian after all in that it is an improvement on Anselm's ideas. But the second one definitely is pure *Ranselmianism*, and so is Rogers' general failure to distinguish between the freedom of those rational creatures who are morally good and those who aren't. This is all the more surprising as in her first book on free will in Anselm she does acknowledge this distinction. Still, I would say that her tacit departure from Anselm's doctrine of grace, the transformation of Anselm into *Ranselm* in the present book is, at least in part, due to a misapprehension in the first one. For there she overlooks (like all other English-speaking commentators I know of) that Anselm consistently refuses to attribute a "free will" *(voluntas libera)* to the "unjust". All he does attribute to those who are not morally good is an (idle) capacity to keep justice, in case it were given to them by divine grace, a capacity he calls the "freedom of decision" *(libertas arbitrii)*; cf. e. g. *De concordia* 3, 13: "*The will [...] cannot by itself return to justice, without which it is never free, because the natural freedom of decision is useless without it.*" Likewise, everything Anselm says about the extraordinary strength of the will and its power to resist any temptation, applies only to the will of the just – which Rogers does not seem to recognize either. Whereas Anselm consistently distinguishes between *voluntas libera* and *arbitrium liberum*, Rogers, like so many others, consistently translates both as "free will".

Interestingly, it is not clear whether a recognition of Anselm's conviction that a considerable part of humanity is *not* in possession of a free will must compromise Rogers' interpreting Anselm as a libertarian. For in Anselm's view, even the responsibility of the unjust is grounded in an *a se* choice – albeit not in a personal choice, but in the fateful sin of the first human beings who, unlike the unjust now, did possess a free will when making their choice. From Rogers' own criteria it would follow that we are encountering here a *compatibilist* component of Anselm's theory of free will, since Anselm takes the unjust to be responsible in spite of their personal choices being (as she would say) "determined" and not *a se* themselves. If we want to restrict responsibility to personal choices, as Rogers apparently does, we are then bound to admit that Anselm, despite developing a libertarian idea of free will, combines incompatibilist with compatibilist sentiments. However, if we follow the historical Anselm and allow for a specific sort of "family responsibility" as well (which may not seem an overly attractive option), we could say that Anselm indeed shares the thoroughgoing incompatibilism of his brother *Ranselm*.

Ranselm's unrestricted incompatibilism sharply contrasts with the compatibilism embraced by *Raugustine*. Rogers' reading of Augustine as a "theist compatibilist" who simply "does not share" (AF, 44) libertarian intuitions and probably never did (24), is not central to her book, so there is no need to go into it here. Suffice it to say that it is highly controversial within Augustinian scholarship, that it compels her to accuse Augustine of inconsistency (Augustine, Rogers

says, claims that God does not bear the ultimate responsibility for sin and yet implies that He does, cf. AF, 43), that it does not seem to be supported by the texts she quotes in *Anselm on Freedom*, and that Anselm's theory of free will may rather be understood as an interpretation and enhancement of Augustine's legacy on the topic.

Another query concerns Rogers' account of an Anselmian choice. It seems to me that she seriously misrepresents its mechanisms in at least two ways. For one, she repeatedly submits that Anselm's analysis of the will's two inclinations *(affectiones)* prefigures Harry Frankfurt's distinction between first- and second-order desires in that the inclination to benefit is a first-order desire and the inclination to justice a second-order desire consisting in a *desire* to *will* benefits in the right way. What Anselm is bringing to our attention here, she believes, is our ability to "step back" (83), "to evaluate and embrace or reject certain first-order desires" (90). Now it is certainly true that Anselm's anthropology implies that we do indeed have this ability, our mind being made up of memory, intellect and will. However, his doctrine of the will's two inclinations as such arguably is *not* about any kind of second-order desire or volition at all. "The desire for justice", says Rogers, "is a desire for 'rightness of will preserved for its own sake'. It is therefore a second order desire that one's first order desires for benefits should be properly ordered" (67). But this is clearly a *non-sequitur*: To will justice is, in Anselm's definition, to will *what* one ought to will *because* one ought to will it, or in an idiom alien to Anselm, to will duty for duty's sake (with duty and true happiness not being opposed to each other, as Rogers rightly observes). There is no will or desire *to will* implied here at all. Willing something and willing it for a certain reason is all there is to it.

A second misgiving one may have about Rogers' account of the mechanisms of choice in Anselm concerns her contention that the choice is "not some discreet and unique act that can be isolated from what precedes and follows it", no "action separate from the motivating inclination and having its own ontological status" (103), not "the effect of some new causal power" (97), no "sudden event, coming out of the blue", but "just [...] the desire carried to a certain point" (106), or, as she had it in her other book, simply a "winning out" (AF, 64) of one of the will's inclinations God has laid into the human will. Only such a deflated picture of choice, thinks Rogers, complies with a principle most firmly embraced by Anselm, namely that God is the creator of everything that exists except Himself. In the final analysis, a choice is nothing over and above something already there, a "thin event" at best, "ontologically dependent on the elements producing the event in a way that allows the event itself not to have ontological status" (105). But as W. Matthews Grant has argued in an essay which one might have expected Rogers to at least mention ("Anselm on Freedom: A defense of Roger's project, a critique of her reconciliation of libertarian freedom with God the *creator omnium*". *Saint Anselm Journal* 8.1/2012), this appears to be at variance with her denial that God causes free creaturely choices, a denial which she takes to be the hallmark of libertarianism in a theological context; for it seems to reduce the creaturely choice to elements caused by God and to reduce the "agent" to inactivity. It is further at variance with Anselm's own teaching and, indeed, one of *Ranselm's* most spectacular appearances in the book. The verb *velle*, observes Rogers, is used by Anselm in the sense of "to will", but also in the sense of "to desire". When Anselm in his dialogue on the *Fall of the Devil* (ch. 3) coins the word *pervelle*, this is to designate the "desiring 'through' such that the desire is now an intention" (92). One desire, say the will's inclination to benefits, turns into an intention, while the other, say the will's inclination to justice, is overridden. This is what a free choice boils down to in Rogers' opinion. But, as is patent from the context, it is not in the least what Anselm has in mind. He is quite clear that "to will through" is to persevere in one's fully fledged *will* (and not in some desire) – to stick to one's choice – until the end, that is, until the completion of the act. By contrast, failing to "will

through" means altering one's will before the action is completed: "Have you never begun something with the will and the power to carry it out and then not carried it out because you changed your will before the end of the affair?" (*De casu diaboli*, 3) An example would be to put down for good a scholarly book one originally wanted to read through after reading the first chapter. Perhaps it did not occur to Anselm to say or imply what *Ranselm* says and implies here for the following reason: While Rogers commends this deflated account of choice as a particularly attractive brand of agent-causation ("parsimonious agent-causation"), one may wonder whether it effectively contains a cause, and, for that matter, an agent – a problem she is, however, aware of and discusses at length.

Rogers' book has considerable merits as regards its philosophical as well as its more historical parts, and there seems to be nothing fundamentally wrong with its author's oft-criticized methodology. It reflects some of the latest developments in the free will debate and features some original arguments contributing to that debate, which alone make it worth reading. Her Anselm interpretation is instructive and generally illuminating. But these merits are overshadowed by the fact that the "Anselmian" Libertarianism defended by Rogers proves to be fairly un-Anselmian in more than one respect. Her interpretation of Anselm's theory of free will has been subject to criticism following the publication of *Anselm on Freedom*, accusing her, among other things, of seriously distorting her hero, and apart from that there have been a number of new contributions to the topic since. It is regrettable that, except for a polemic between the author and Hugh McCann, her book does not (as far as I can see) take either into account. Unfortunately, it moreover proves her *willing through* to boycott any Anselm scholarly work not having been written in English.