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Heidegger's Existential Diagnosis and Bonaventure's Positive Existential Remedy: Using Hermeneutics to Address the Problem of Anxiety over Intellectual Finitude [†]

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Abstract: In today's postcritical environment, the philosophical disciplines have at times acquired a negative reputation for abstraction, relativity and impracticability. While indispensable to the modern university curriculum, the meaning and utility of the philosophical enterprise continues to register ambivalently in modern popular consciousness. In this article, I challenge this popular assumption with a case study in philosophical interpretation, by applying the hermeneutics of German existentialist Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) to issues of practical religious life. Within a life-context of anxiety over intellectual finitude and its ensuing projections, I demonstrate how the innovative sapiential reading of Christ by medieval Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1217–1274) supplies a productive intervention to ensure a new state-of-mind. This new state-of-mind arising from a new mode of understanding and being-in-the-world, amounts to a transmutation of the Heideggerian hermeneutic mode in the light of biblical truth. Bonaventure's threefold way of Christological exegesis serves as a requisite framework in which to practically redeploy the Heideggerian way of understanding towards a positive existential end.

Keywords: Bonaventure of Bagnoregio; Martin Heidegger; hermeneutics; Christological exegesis; phenomenology; existentialism; subjectivity; *sapientia*

1. Introduction

The historical, cultural and intellectual gulf that separates twentieth-century existentialist Martin Heidegger and thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio conceals an affinity stemming from their common derivation in Catholic scholasticism, particularly Franciscan. Born in Messkirch, Germany in 1889, Heidegger was raised in a Roman Catholic household. At age twenty, having undertaken six years of seminary education, he entered a Jesuit seminary but was discharged due to heart trouble. He proceeded to study theology at the University of Freiburg. In 1911, he switched to philosophy owing to the influence of Carl Braig (1852–1923). Having completed his doctorate in philosophy in 1913 and his habilitation thesis on Franciscan John Duns Scotus (1265/66–1308) in 1915, Heidegger started his teaching career in the same university. From 1923, Heidegger moved to the University of Marburg, but moved back to Freiburg in 1928. His teaching career ended with his retirement in 1959, but his prolific literary output was to continue until his death in 1976.[1]

Heidegger's philosophical interest had been ignited as early as 1906, when as a seventeen-year-old, he read *On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle* by Franz Brentano (1838–1917). Heidegger's interest was to deepen through later readings of the works of Aristotle and his medieval scholastic interpreters such as Scotus, Bonaventure (c. 1217–1274) and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). As his first mentor, Braig had encouraged the young

Heidegger to set these scholastic writings in dialogue with modern philosophy. Heidegger's subsequent engagement with philosophers such as his other mentor Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and Frederick Nietzsche (1844–1900) extended his thinking in an existentialist direction. Furthermore, Heidegger's study of the ideas of Protestant reformers such as Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564) augmented his growing disillusionment with Catholicism, so much so that he broke with its system in 1918 (McGrath 2006, pp. 25–29).

Significantly, Heidegger's synthesis of hermeneutics and ontology led him to combine medieval questions about the meaning and foundations of being with modern anxieties about the unity of knowledge and the basis of intellectual certitude. Heidegger's radical transformation of the medieval scholastic tradition in light of modern existentialist sources renders his system a key resource for marking how theological revelation and philosophical acumen can profitably intersect within the dialogue of tradition and modernity. Heidegger can be a good guide in showing how modern hermeneutics (with its historicizing focus) can be enriched by the wisdom (*sapientia*) of medieval Christian exegesis (with its centrally ontological concern). For Heidegger, a key hermeneutic question is that of hermeneutical selfhood's ontological foundations; a question Bonaventure also took up in his quest to discover the ineffable ground of human flourishing in his pivotal treatise *The Soul's Journey into God* (first written in Latin in 1259). Both Heidegger and Bonaventure, for historical and hermeneutical reasons, recognized the limits of Aristotelian speculative philosophy as a tool for hermeneutical understanding, and the prospect of a 'something more' in the meaning of being than can be cognized or evidenced empirically (McGrath 2006, pp. 1–24). While Emmanuel Falque, Leonard Bowman, Sonia Sikka and others have thematized Heidegger's connection with scholastic metaphysics by identifying speculative connections between Heidegger and medieval Christian thought, scholarship can nonetheless benefit from a focus on practical issues (Falque 2018; Bowman 1977; Sikka 1997, pp. 11–42). In this article, I demonstrate how a synthetic approach incorporating Heideggerian and Bonaventurian insights can be enacted in everyday contexts of living.

2. The Problem of Hermeneutical Foundations: Heidegger's Diagnosis and Bonaventure's Positive Solution

In our modern post-enlightenment moment, texts are often viewed as data repositories which contain principles and structures to be functionally applied in practical settings. The modern scientific way of reading first comprehends the text's underlying conceptual structures, and then tries to functionally instantiate these in our structures of thinking or living. To the extent that the logical order of the text is correspondent to the causal order of reality, reading simply gets at the structurality of structure. The move toward the structurality of structure lays the text open to the prospect of being deconstructed. Since its function is not to disclose the sheer gift of presence but merely to conceptualize it, the text stands as essentially extrinsic to the substance of that which it seeks to convey, and *ipso facto*, it forsakes the irreducible historicity of its disclosure in 'being-there' (Da-sein) as Heidegger would assert (Clark 1986, p. 1010). Nevertheless, it can be argued that some texts operate in an entirely different medium from that of an information sheet or an instruction manual for constructing something. Rather than a set of scientific principles to be transposed onto the level of actual causality, textual reality can be of an entirely different order from that of scientific truth. According to Richard Palmer, such a reality 'is to be understood as an historical story; a happening to be heard' (Palmer 1969, p. 19). A text is not to be *grasped* or *conceptualized* as object (per the representational notion of language), but is to be *inhabited* (per the phenomenological mode) as a mode of human expression (Clark 1986, p. 1010). Beyond the rationality of general principles which are timeless, universal and changeless irrespective of context, we can proceed to the rationality of an event which is contingent, unrepeatable and particular. In granting such a historicizing focus to hermeneutics, we now tread on territory that properly belongs to the realm of hermeneutic ontology.

Heidegger indicates an entire level of understanding that precedes the level of explanation. This is the level of pre-understanding, of the basic dispositions, values and assumptions that shape one's entire perceptual relation to the object. Meaning is in some measure determined by this originary order of approach to the text. But the text also speaks; it has a being that demands interpretation, that grasps its reader, and to which the reader must in some way conform. The relation between the reader and the text is the essential hermeneutic question (Palmer 1969, pp. 33–45). Heidegger appeals to a more primordial level of understanding that is rooted not in human consciousness and human categories, but in the manifestness of the things encountered. Instead of starting with a general theory to predetermine one's way in things, understanding forms on the interior of the disclosure of things.[2] Heidegger goes beyond simple descriptions of the form and matter of things. In his 1936 essay, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (delivered as lectures in the mid-1930s and published in 1950), Heidegger asserts that the pair of peasant shoes in a painting by Vincent van Gogh can be observed to be 'constructed of leather' and 'joined by thread'. Yet these observations do not bring one any closer to discovering the shoes' nature. For Heidegger, these shoes, far more than reflecting an element of the peasant culture to which they belong, disclose the actual being of what exists in the artwork, thus revealing 'the truth of what is'. In *The Essence of Reasons* (first published in German in 1950), Heidegger adds that it is impossible to get at the fixed, universal truth of things.[3] Instead, they shine out to oneself from within the context of a 'unified fabric of relationships which gives meaning to the world', as Robert Schulberg aptly puts it. As such, 'to make something apparent, we must set it forth in a context of being, an 'open, relational context' which will enable it to be (Stulberg 1973, pp. 259–61; Palmer 1969, pp. 159–61). For Heidegger, since the meaning of being cannot be tied down to a particular formality, any form of ideal objectivity immediately restricts the voluminous truth of being. While he does not deny the existence of an origin whose presence can be thought, he resists its formalization by biblical revelation as the 'commonest, cheapest form of metaphysics' (Hemming 1998, pp. 373–418, especially 380). The superabundant truth of being cannot be pinpointed in a static conception.[4]

But what if there is an even more primordial level of interpretation—that which properly belongs to the first origin of hermeneutical reality, the foundation of hermeneutical selfhood? How do we articulate this origin or foundation? Thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian Bonaventure came closest to capturing this unspeakable level of hermeneutical reality when he expressed his longing to encounter that Word beyond all knowledge and experience. This is vividly articulated in *The Soul's Journey into God*:

> In this passing over, if it is to be perfect, all intellectual activities must be left behind and the height of our affection must be totally transferred and transformed into God. This, however, is mystical and most secret, which no one knows except him who receives it, no one receives except him who desires it, and no one desires except him who is inflamed in his very marrow by the fire of the Holy Spirit whom Christ sent into the world. (Bonaventure 1978, chp. 7, n. 4, p. 113).[5]

In a single moment of synthetic insight, Bonaventure unveils the innermost structure of interpretation: love and knowledge of the object interpreted, actualizing and being actualized by one's attentiveness, leading the reader deeper into its reality. Perhaps the words of nineteenth-century African-American botanist George Washington Carver are most pertinent for this relational context of knowing: that if you love something enough, it will divulge you its secret.[6] For Bonaventure, this affective movement of interpretation, this being motivated by a love for that which lies beyond all sight and all words, drives the soul deeper into the heart of things to seek their spiritual secret. This secret is not to be divulged to the prideful, nor to the presumptuous, nor to those who would seek for mastery. Only by listening to the object, being attentive to the *being-there* of the One present within and through all, can the soul have any prospect of knowing the innermost secret of flourishing. Contrary to the complexity and perplexity of the modern religious life, this simplicity of

starting point in Christ the Word beyond all words is axiomatic for Bonaventure. Needless to say, the intelligibility of this Word exceeds that of a purely intellectual certitude and pertains to God's own self-revelation rather than to humanity in its self-determination and finitude. Determination of things is resplendent with the divine intentionality. Thereby, the understanding and experience of things is mediated by Scripture as the regulative idea. Bonaventure's innovative way of reading Scripture is evident in his biblical commentaries. In the scriptural medium, one is brought to relate to an everyday phenomenon such as the wind or the sun in a thoroughly Christological manner—living, imagining and thinking them as a means of living in God.[7]

In Bonaventure's way of interpretation, van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes would recall biblical images such as Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians that their 'feet [be shod] with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace' (Eph 6:15).[8] It would also recall correlative verses such as: 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings and who proclaim salvation. . .' (Isa 52:7). Here, feet that are shod signify the readiness of the sojourner to step along the way of Christ. In literal terms, they represent a willingness to walk or run, often for very long distances, towards the desired destination. Bonaventure's perception of van Gogh's peasant shoes would be pregnant with the axiology of faith, laden with the values of Christ's kingdom. To see all things through the biblical prism is to structure one's way in them according to one's inner comportment to Scripture's subject—the Supreme Good (*Summum Bonum*). Christ the Word exemplifies the ideal form of living since the deep structure of reality and experience is pre-eminently Christological. When one's mind grasps an outward sign with the senses, one proceeds to 'see beyond' the appearance of the sign. From the sensible form, one reduces to the spiritual content; this is only possible since content is expressed through form in the very act of being. As it is on the ontological level, so it is on the theological; the Word expresses God the Father through the bond of the Holy Spirit in the very act of creation.[9] As I shall demonstrate in my subsequent case study, the expressive and dynamic order of a Heideggerian hermeneutics can be given a more normative foundation by virtue of its origination in Christ, the centralizing principle of Bonaventure's 'hermeneutic ontology'.

3. Heidegger's Hermeneutic Theory

3.1. The Relation between State-of-Mind and Understanding

As Heidegger expresses in his *magnum opus*, *Being and Time* (first published in German in 1927), the hermeneutic process is made up of three basic elements.[10] The first element is one's 'state-of-mind' or 'attunement'.[11] This is defined as one's natural state of response to the world one encounters. When one has an ice cream, one is happy; when one feels the sun's heat on one's skin, one is invigorated. The second element is one's understanding of the world that state-of-mind discloses. State-of-mind in its very depths expresses one's understanding of the world into which one is delivered or 'thrown'. If one experiences the world to be an essentially benevolent place full of opportunity and sustenance, this issues in a hopeful or optimistic state-of-mind. The third element is one's 'being-in-the-world' of which understanding is a basic form (Heidegger 2010, pp. 126–39). To quote Heidegger:

> Attunement [state-of-mind] is one of the existential structures in which the being of the 'there' dwells. Equiprimordially with it, understanding constitutes this being. Attunement always has its understanding, even if only by suppressing it. Understanding is always attuned. If we interpret understanding as a fundamental existential, we see that this phenomenon is conceived as a fundamental mode of the being of Da-sein. (Heidegger 2010, p. 134)

Understanding dwells together with one's state-of-mind or attunement from the very beginning of the mind's being-made-aware of the world in which it is. Understanding is thereby primary and constitutive of the being of the world in general. If understanding is interpreted as a fundamental form of being-in-the-world, the disclosure of the thing in

itself is a fundamental way that being-in-the-world comes to be. In summary, one's mode of 'being-in-the-world', or personal horizon of what can be or not be, is constituted by one's understanding of the world as expressed in one's state-of-mind. To extend my illustration, my presumption of the world's benevolence (understanding), expressed in an optimistic disposition (state-of-mind), issues in a certain habitual form, a set of choices and beliefs or *modus operandi* (mode-of-being-in-the-world).

3.2. Nature of Understanding

Hermeneutics is not an objective explanation of the geometrical shape of being, divested of personal value or significance, and fixed in text, but an effervescing horizon of existential possibility that remains specific to the changing personal life-context of the interpreter. Heidegger asserts that the hermeneutic task consists in detecting and revoicing the effervescing existential forms that pertain in the course of one's being-in-the-world. Instead of taking flight from one's own temporality by seeking to formalize things according to the dictates of a discrete research agenda, one is called instead to listen to oneself in one's own act of being, making ontologically present to the intellect what is ontically present to existence.

Accordingly, the essential hermeneutic task is not to understand what things are in the world, but the *way* one is *with them* in the world. Not so much 'what' things are in the abstract, but 'how' they are to oneself. One does not look at contingencies or causal dependencies in the world out there (this causes that, this depends on that for its being), but possibilities or what can be or not be. Being is not abstracted from time, but always 'being-in-time'.

> In understanding as an existential, the thing we are able to do is not a what, but being as existing. The mode of being of Da-sein as a potentiality of being lies existentially in understanding. Da-sein is not something objectively present which then has as an addition the ability to do something, but is rather primarily being-possible. (Heidegger 2010, p. 134)

The world presents itself to oneself already interpreted by oneself. One already has state-of-mind or a fundamental existential disposition towards that which is ready-to-hand. Whenever one encounters something in the world, one already has an understanding of its purpose for oneself.[12]

3.3. Application of Heidegger's Hermeneutics to Interpretation of Texts

Applying Heidegger's method to the interpretation of written texts, one discovers in the text what one already knows about the subject matter.

> When the particular concretion of interpretation in the sense of exact text interpretation likes to appeal to what 'is there,' what is initially 'there' is nothing else than the self-evident, undisputed prejudice of the interpreter, which is necessarily there in each point of departure of the interpretation as what is already 'posited' with interpretation as such, that is, pre-given... (Heidegger 2010, p. 141)

The language of text always refers back to the one interpreting, to one's self-consciousness or to one's self-understanding. This marks a revolution in how a text can be understood. For instance, consider the biblical proposition in 1 John 4:8 that 'God is love.' This statement can be considered principally in terms of a conceptual identification of divinity and charity. One asks how, why, and for whom God is reckoned as 'love'. One can inquire into the meaning of the term 'God', or whether and in what manner it is determined by the predicate. In this case, the reader is seeking to analyze the textual experience from a standpoint outside it. Yet, 'love' is not an entity to be atomized and analyzed in its constituent parts. Rather, it is a fundamental existential, a mode of being-in-the-world, whose possibility is only actualizable in the personal event of decision. There is a world of difference between conceptualizing 'love' in the abstract and experiencing 'love' in reality. For Heidegger,

a prior experience of love ought to presuppose a genuine understanding of the reality signified by the text.

3.4. Deficiencies in Heidegger's Hermeneutics and (Dis)continuities with Bonaventure's Hermeneutics

Heidegger's way of understanding, while profound, cannot be of any use to the individual interpreter unless it is subject to the light of a superior wisdom. In his critique of Heidegger's phenomenology of religious experience, John Martis affirms Heidegger's wish to transcend the objectivizing tendency of philosophy as science with a 'phenomenological cognizance of experience in its facticity—experience as actually undergone.' However, since religious experience is always configured to a transcendent, any phenomenologizing that seeks to bring out the thing in itself must take this dimension into account. At this juncture, Heidegger seems to err in seeking to limit a phenomenology of religion to the horizon of the visible—that which one can hear, see, feel, touch and thereby experience in and of oneself. Interpretation is entirely formed on the interior of worldly or everyday experience, without any significant recourse to the otherworldly or extraordinary, the supernatural or the miraculous that daily seems to invade the horizon of some believers. This results in a 'missing element' in the phenomenology of religion, or the omission of the transcendent or 'numinous' as an authority or an agent in the individual believer's quest for meaning. This transcendent dimension in the conceptualization of experience is, indeed, Christ himself—the 'absolute other' whose structural incursion sustains the phenomenological approach, saving it from falling into its 'theorizing other' that is the 'scientific worldview' (Martis 2016). In other words, it is only in being open to the fullness of reality that phenomenology survives itself. Only then can one avoid foisting one's own pre-determined categories on factical experience, hence precluding the agency and authority of the real in its determination.

Similar to Heidegger, Bonaventure advocates an attitude of unconditional openness to being-itself. Both of their approaches can be seen as phenomenological, since they are negotiated in the act of encounter with the actual. For Heidegger, there is no singular ground of being that can tie being to a specific formality; not one theological conceptuality—not even biblical—can adequately convey the beingness of being. A premature grasp of the phenomenon according to the dictates of a research agenda only leads to abstraction, whereas allowing the thing to show itself through itself leads to its reality. Knowledge of the truth of being is grounded in the manifestness of being itself, which of itself resists one's will to essentialize and to predetermine. On the contrary, in Bonaventure's Christocentric faith-based hermeneutics, Christ is foundation of hermeneutical selfhood, the hermeneutical principle *par excellence.* The determination of reality belongs to Christ, the form of whose incarnation is instantiated in the created order. Christ is the center and exemplar of reality, the total incarnation of wisdom (*sapientia*), the way to God the Father.[13] As Emmanuel Falque affirms in his pivotal *ressourcement* study on Bonaventurian and Heideggerian hermeneutics, it is fitting to bring both thinkers into dialogue because Heidegger had indeed digested Bonaventure's insights and applied them to his own work.[14] This connection is unsurprising, considering the various thematic and methodological affinities between the works of the two thinkers.[15]

4. Bonaventure's Hermeneutics of Christological Encounter

Bonaventure was born in 1217 in Bagnoregio in Italy. In 1236, at age nineteen, he embarked on a course of study at the University of Paris—the premier institution in Western Christendom of his time. After four years of studying 'liberal arts' and philosophy, he graduated with a Master of Arts. In 1243, he joined the Order of the Friars Minor—a mendicant order founded by fellow Italian Francis of Assisi (c. 1181–1226) in 1209.[16] As a Franciscan, Bonaventure studied Sacred Scripture and theology and eventually taught at the Franciscan school. Combining his 'liberal arts' and theological training, he constructed an innovative philosophical-theological synthesis.[17]

Medieval scholastic Bonaventure first theorized his simple yet substantial synthesis in his foundational theological work, the *Commentary on the Sentences* (written between 1250 to 1253).[18] He applies his whole being—body, mind and soul—in posing three simple existential questions of Scripture: 'What?' namely, 'Who am I?'; 'How?' or 'How do I live'; Why? or 'Why do I exist?' These three basic existential categories of content, mode and end are extracted from the Aristotelian epistemological frame of subject matter, method and goal respectively. There is also a twofold efficient cause or origin: God or the interpreter of the biblical text. Bonaventure applies an Aristotelian framework of causality to biblical interpretative mechanics (Bonaventure 2013, bk.1, prologue, pp. 1–15; Minnis 1984, pp. 28, 29, 79, 81).

Bonaventure enjoins one to be unconditionally open to the whole Christ (*totus Christus*), in such a way that one's entire being—one's ways of thinking, living and seeing—is pervaded with the reality of heaven. Christ as the content, mode and end determines being in its deepest depths. When the believer as reader of Scripture poses three similar questions of Christ, a threefold answer is obtained. Firstly, what is the nature of Christ? One arrives at certain biblical truths: '[Christ], who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.' (Phil 2:6–7) Secondly, how did Christ manifest his nature in his Incarnation? One receives truths like this one: 'For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' (Mark 10:45) Thirdly, why did Christ do this, or to what end or purpose? Such verses spring to mind: 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.' (Luke 5:32) This threefold nature, path and purpose of Christ is spiritually intuited in one's memory, cognized by one's intellect, and experienced in life by a commission of one's will. Bonaventure's exegetical strategy consists in bringing faith principles already incarnate in the believer's life to conscious reflection by affective participation in Christ's literal experience. One can know, envision, and live the *why, how* and *what* of one's own being with significant recourse to the *why, how* and *what* of Christ's being mediated in Scripture. Bonaventure's hermeneutics consists in reflecting upon what one believes and how one lives in search of ultimate norms and final ends.

5. Differences between Bonaventure's and Heidegger's Hermeneutics

Heidegger counsels a return to one's own being-in-time, one's being-made-aware of the world in its 'throwness'. Phenomena are expressive of human existence in its fallibility and diversity. On the other hand, Bonaventure understands that phenomena in their givenness are manifestative of the divine heart and work in its ontological unity and completeness. Bonaventure's prospect of divining the source and end of all things, through all things, means that the being to which phenomenology tends is not the world of factual experience in its everydayness. Bonaventure conceives the being intended by phenomenology as the 'being-there' of God himself. Christ is the sure methodological foundation or frame of reference.[19] Heidegger begins with factual experience as actually undergone, and then reduces to an existential understanding of this experience. In a reversal of Heidegger's hermeneutic process, Bonaventure encounters Christ first—the medium of Scripture and reality. Bonaventure then revoices and exegetes what lies on the interior of that experience. By beginning from one's vision of God, Bonaventure sets factual experience on a solid descriptive foundation with which to build a maximal concept of one's existence as it 'ought to be'. In some sense, even though Bonaventure's Christocentric approach can be characterized as phenomenological akin to Heidegger's, it presents a Christocentric completion of the humanist ideal.[20]

6. A Case Study in Self-Interpretation: Anxiety over One's Intellectual Finitude

The productive correlation of Heideggerian and Bonaventurian hermeneutic approaches can be illustrated by a real-life example regarding one's anxiety over one's intellectual finitude. In Heideggerian terms, one can be afraid of what others think of

oneself—particularly their assessment of one's intelligence. This state-of-mind or mood shapes one's way of being-in-the-world. When faced with a difficulty of interpretation, one is reluctant to seek or accept the help of others. Rather one simply pretends to understand or refuses to confront it. When singled out to do a special task, there is the fear of failure or striving for the impossible ideal of perfection. This might lead to giving up prematurely or excessive protectiveness or reworking of one's work. When one reads the apostle Paul's declaration: '...I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...' (Phil 3:8), one struggles to understand its deeper meaning. One's own mode of being-in-the-world, which leads to a specific handling of the horizon of possibility open to oneself, expresses what one has experienced or understood to be the case about the world in general. One understands that the world generally values intellectual prowess and rewards it.

A Bonaventurian Intervention Addressing Deficiencies in Heidegger's Approach

The experience of Christ on the Cross as biblically exposited by Bonaventure provides a form of radical intervention to the Heideggerian diagnosis of existence. This intervention can be considered 'transformational'. Positive growth in personal wellbeing consists precisely in an attempt to impose new forms of life and thought; these forms are originated, oriented and modelled by Christ himself as perfect Wisdom or *sapientia*. It is not enough simply to know about Christ, but also to think, feel and live as Christ. In the specific life-context to which I refer—anxiety over one's intellectual finitude and its ensuing projections—Bonaventure's Christ supplies an intervention that is radical and world-changing. This entails re-basing identity and self-worth in something other than oneself, one's potentiality or one's accretions. One's self-valuation is relocated in the valuation of a perfectly benevolent Other.

Bonaventure's sapiential reading of Christ supplies a threefold intervention, dissipating one's anxiety over one's intellectual finitude. Firstly, one now knows on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Cross that one is accepted and valued no matter whether one succeeds or fails or how one is judged by others. Therefore, one can simply be, without striving to 'feel better about oneself' through deeds of intellectual heroism. This new certitude of identity or 'being-enough' designates the content or nature of Christological existence—what one is. Secondly, this new confidence in the face of one's own finitude leads to a change in mode or path, namely a change in one's existential behavior or how one is. In a transmutation of one's original 'anxiety-toward-death', one can move forward with confidence, taking new ground in one's own way without incessant fear of failure or not meeting human expectations. Thirdly, one can put oneself to work, not frenetically out of fear of losing the acclamation one has worked so hard to win, but with care and integrity and out of love and grateful service to Christ who already calls every believer 'enough'. This intentional shift designates end or purpose—why one is. In Christ, one becomes fully oneself, no longer transfixed by fear and self-doubt, but confident in appropriating God-possibilities for the world in which one lives.

7. Conclusions

Bonaventure's positive existential end is a new state-of-mind arising from a new Christocentric mode of understanding and being-in-the-world. This amounts to a transmutation of Heidegger's approach to understanding by the light of Bonaventurian wisdom. Bonaventure's hermeneutics as a means of living can offer significant resources towards the practical deployment of an existential hermeneutics in contexts of everyday life. Such a Bonaventurian intervention returns philosophy to its foundational expression as the love and study of wisdom.

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Notes

[1] For a brief biography of Heidegger, see (Wheeler 2011).

[2] For Heidegger's understanding of truth as concealment/unconcealment, see (Caputo 1988).

[3] "The Origin of the Work of Art", Heidegger (2002); For the German edition *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, see Heidegger (1986); *The Essence of Reasons,* see the bilingual edition, *Vom Wesen Des Grundes, The Essence of Reasons*, Heidegger (1969).

[4] Kuravsky notes that Heidegger's 'origin is only available if a radical self-questionability is enacted in a way that illuminates the illusionary state of the non-questioned pre-understanding of Being.' (Kuravsky 2021).

[5] For the Latin edition *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, see (Bonaventure 1882–1902c).

[6] 'Anything will give up its secrets if you love it enough. Not only have I found that when I talk to the little flower or to the little peanut they will give up their secrets, but I have found that when I silently commune with people, they give up their secrets also—if you love them enough.' (McMurry and Edwards 1981).

[7] Bonaventure's interpretation of the 'sun' and 'wind' figures can be found in Ecclesiastes 1:6–7, *Commentary on Ecclesiastes* (Bonaventure 2005, chp. 1, pp. 99–104); For the Latin edition *Commentarius in Librum Ecclesiastae,* see (Bonaventure 1882–1902b).

[8] All biblical quotations in this article are sourced from the (Holy Bible, New International Version 2011).

[9] Contemporary theologian Balthasar offers an insightful exposition and retrieval of Bonaventure's Trinitarian hermeneutics. See (Caseralla 1996).

[10] *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962, 2010); For the German edition *Sein und Zeit*, see (Heidegger 1993).

[11] Macquarrie and Robinson translated 'Befindlichkeit' as 'state-of-mind' and Staumbaugh translated this as 'attunement'.

[12] For a summary of the basic elements of Heidegger's hermeneutic ontology, see (Jensen 2007, pp. 118–29).

[13] For Bonaventure's theme of Christocentricity, see (Hayes 1981, especially pp. 1–24).

[14] Please refer to Heidegger, *Curriculum vitae* in (Ott 1990, pp. 90–92, especially 91; quoted in Falque 2018, lii).

[15] McGrath analyzes the philosophical relationship between Bonaventure and Heidegger (McGrath 2006, p. 33).

[16] For the life and works of Francis of Assisi, see (Sabatier 1913).

[17] The date of birth and other key events in Bonaventure's chronology have yet to be established. For the different authoritative perspectives, see (Quinn 1972; van der Heijden and Roest 2019; Hammond 2009); For Bonaventure's life and works, see (Bougerol 1964; Schlosser 2014).

[18] For the Latin edition *Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum*, see (Bonaventure 1882–1902a).

[19] For a detailed treatment of the distinction between faith-based and experience-based approaches, see (Jeanrond 1991, p. 130).

[20] For a detailed argument on the relation between humanist and Christocentric reading approaches, see (Falque 2016).

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