

BONAVENTURE AND THE COINCIDENCE OF OPPOSITES: A RESPONSE TO CRITICS

When Zachary Hayes reviewed my book *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites*, he concluded with the observation: "It is a book that will prove to be controversial."¹ His remark was prophetic, for the book has evoked responses that are both sympathetic and critical. Two recent articles have appeared raising technical criticisms against my position by leading Bonaventure specialists: one in this journal by George Tavad and one in *Doctor seraphicus* by Camille Bérubé.² I am honored that two such distinguished Bonaventure scholars should take my work seriously enough to challenge my position by a technical analysis of Bonaventure's texts. Having considered their criticisms seriously, I have not changed my position but, in fact, hold it more strongly now in the light of the clarification that has come from their challenges. For this I am grateful, as I am grateful to the editor of *Theological Studies* for giving me this opportunity to respond in the journal where one of these criticisms has appeared.

THE BOOK'S THESIS: COMPLEMENTARY OPPOSITES

Both Tavad and Bérubé present my position accurately, although there are certain dimensions which I feel they do not take adequately into account. In my book I propose that the key to understanding Bonaventure's thought is the coincidence of opposites. Both critics highlight the fact that I distinguish three meanings of the coincidence of opposites and apply only the third to Bonaventure. The first is a monistic view in which opposites coincide to such an extent that they become one. Their polarity is judged to be an illusion which should be transcended in an undifferentiated unity. An example of this type is found in the doctrine of nondifferentiation of the Hindu theologian Śankara. The second is a dualistic view in which opposites remain but with no real coincidence, as, for example, in Greek atomism or in the Islamic doctrine of the absolute transcendence of God. The third view maintains both unity and difference. I call this type "the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity."³ By this I mean that the opposites genuinely coincide

¹ *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1978); review by Zachary Hayes, *JR* 60 (1980) 351.

² George Tavad, "The Coincidence of Opposites: A Recent Interpretation of Bonaventure," *TS* 41 (1980) 576-84; Camille Bérubé, "Grandeur et misère de notre connaissance de Dieu chez saint Bonaventure," *Doctor seraphicus* 27 (1980) 51-81. For examples of positive responses, see the review by Zachary Hayes, cited above, and two reviews by Frank Podgorski, *TS* 40 (1979) 790; *JES* 16 (1979) 526-27.

³ *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 20.

while at the same time continuing to exist as opposites. In their union they mutually affirm each other, complementing each other and through their union mutually intensifying their individuality as opposites. Examples of this type can be seen in the doctrine of the complementarity of the Yin-Yang, the female and male principles in Taoism, the I-Thou relation of Martin Buber, and Teilhard de Chardin's principle that union differentiates.

My enterprise consisted in analyzing Bonaventure's thought in the light of this third meaning: the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity. From this point of view I studied key texts of Bonaventure and his major doctrines: the Trinity, God and the world, the Incarnation, redemption, and return to the Father. It is important to note that I distinguished in Bonaventure five different types of this coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity, based on the metaphysical status of the various areas, e.g., the Trinity, God and the world, the Incarnation.⁴ In each area this type of coincidence of opposites is found but not in an identical way. What constitutes the unity of these five classes is their basic conformity to the pattern and the fact that Christ as Word is the *medium* of the coincidence. The distinction of these five classes is an important dimension of my position, which I believe has not always been adequately taken into account by critics. I will return to this point later.

I do not claim that Bonaventure used the term *coincidentia oppositorum* or that he employed the method of contraries thematically as Nicholas of Cusa did. Rather, as Tavad rightfully observes, I hold that the coincidence of opposites was "the unthematic pattern of Bonaventure's theological thought."⁵ Yet I mean more than the fact that the coincidence of opposites is implicit in his thought. In certain key passages, such as chapters 5-7 of the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and the first of the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, it provides the rhetorical structure of extended passages. I claim, however, that Bonaventure is not merely using a rhetorical device here but that the rhetorical structure reflects the metaphysical and theological structure of Bonaventure's thought as a whole. Because of this fact I have used a twofold method: (1) an analysis of these key texts where the coincidence of opposites is clearly visible in the rhetorical structure and logic of the passage; (2) a systematic study of Bonaventure's major doctrines: the Trinity, exemplarism, illumination, the Incarnation and redemption. In these doctrines, I have analyzed the coincidence of opposites as the indigenous logic of Bonaventure's system. Thus the structural analysis supports the textual analysis. This is an

⁴ Ibid. 200-208.

⁵ Tavad 576.

important point, which some critics have not adequately recognized, since they claim that the key texts employ the coincidence of opposites as a mere rhetorical device, or they adduce other texts against my interpretation without taking into account the architectonic structure of Bonaventure's thought. It is on this latter ground that my thesis chiefly rests. Even if there were no text in which Bonaventure used the rhetoric of the coincidence of opposites, I could still make my claim on the basis of the coincidence of opposites implicit within the architectonic structure of his thought. Since this is a crucial issue, I would like to quote from Zachary Hayes's review a passage which states my position with great clarity:

Some scholars might be inclined to see Bonaventure's pervasively dialectical language as a literary device. Indeed, many of Bonaventure's texts could be explained in this way if there were nothing more to be accounted for. But a closer reading of Bonaventure reveals that the dialectical relation of opposites is operative at a much deeper level. What may appear, at first, as a mere literary device is a style of language that mirrors the basic systematic insights which undergird the entire system. Thus Cousins traces the coincidence of opposites deep into trinitarian metaphysics where it is seen to characterize the relation between the Father and the Son, and even further back into the person of the Father himself who is defined in his personal mystery through mutually affirming, complementary negative and positive poles. Since Bonaventure's texts seem unambiguously clear on this point, Cousins's argument rests on a firm textual foundation.⁶

Also I hold, as Tavad has indicated, that there is an evolution in Bonaventure's thought, with the coincidence of opposites becoming more and more prominent throughout his work until in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* "it became a universal key to the Christocentric understanding of the universe then expounded by the great Franciscan."⁷ This is important because, while acknowledging that I propose an evolution, Tavad bases his objections only on very early texts, chiefly from the *Commentary on the Sentences*. Tavad states his position clearly: "One should, of course, recognize that Prof. Cousins has not tried to base his thesis on the *Commentary on the Sentences*. He has given numerous examples, from the other works of Bonaventure, of what he takes to be instances of a coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity." Then he states his central point: "But it would be a hazardous method to interpret the later works of the Seraphic Doctor against the explicit testimony of the *Commentary*. The suggestion that Bonaventure's thought developed in matters of Christology is acceptable if it does not involve contradicting the *Commentary*. But this is precisely the case in regard to coincidence of opposites. The thesis that has been proposed

⁶ Hayes 350.

⁷ Tavad 576.

is in contradiction to the theology of the *Commentary*.⁸ Tavad then suggests that we should look for other explanations and models for other texts, such as the text on Christ the *medium* from the first of the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*.

In answering Tavad, I will meet his challenge head on by dealing directly with the texts he has cited from the *Commentary on the Sentences*. I do not agree that these texts contradict my thesis. In fact, if properly distinguished, they support my position. However, even if they did contradict my position, I believe that Tavad should not so easily reject my interpretation on the basis of these texts in the face of the wealth of evidence I presented from Bonaventure's writings. In the light of this evidence, one would at least have to examine the possibility that Bonaventure's thought evolved in this area. It would be equally hazardous to ignore this option. But this is merely hypothetical, since I do not think there was an evolution here.

Before proceeding, however, I would like to point out another problem in Tavad's strategy. He does not address adequately the two levels of my methodology: (1) analysis of specific texts where the coincidence of opposites appears and (2) the systematic analysis of Bonaventure's vision as a whole. He cites texts from the *Commentary*, drawing from them a principle which he claims goes counter to my thesis. He does not address what I think is the more important dimension of my method: the systematic analysis of Bonaventure's thought as a whole in the light of the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity. By focusing on texts applied to a limited aspect of Christology, Tavad has failed to take into account the integral context of Bonaventure's thought: the relation of his Christology to his Trinitarian theology and specifically to the metaphysics of exemplarism, through which he examines the coincidence of God and the world. It was precisely this integral context of Bonaventure's thought which I attempted to deal with directly in the second level of my methodology. And it is this integral context of exemplarism that forms the background of the texts cited by Tavad.

TAVARD'S CRITICISM: TEXTS FROM THE COMMENTARY

Tavad's criticism is based on texts from Book 3 of the *Commentary on the Sentences* which deal with the Incarnation. According to Tavad, Bonaventure claims that God and creatures are not to be viewed as opposites. In the texts cited Bonaventure actually uses the term *opposita* and denies that it can be applied to God and creatures. This would be a telling argument against my position, since I claim that one of the forms of the coincidence of opposites in Bonaventure is found in God and

⁸ Tavad 582.

creatures. Tavad's reasoning proceeds as follows: "The divine and the human natures are infinitely distant in being from each other. This distance is beyond any sort of distancing that may be experienced in this world. It is *infinita distantia*."⁹ According to Tavad, this derives from a basic principle affirmed by Bonaventure: that God and creatures do not share a common genus ("Deus autem et creatura nullum genus commune participant").¹⁰ "But if God and human nature," Tavad says, "do not fall within a common genus—and this remains the constant doctrine of Bonaventure—then they obviously cannot fall within the genus which is necessarily common to opposites. For opposites, as Bonaventure clearly states, fall within one genus: 'Omnia opposita communicant in aliquo genere proximo vel remoto' (All opposites communicate in genus, whether proximately or remotely)."¹¹

This is the heart of Tavad's objection: according to this explicit text of Bonaventure, all opposites communicate in genus; but God and creatures do not share a common genus; therefore they cannot be related as opposites. If I were to answer this in scholastic form, I could distinguish the term "opposites," claiming that Bonaventure is here taking it to mean contradictory opposites, not complementary opposites. As a matter of fact, Tavad makes just such a distinction. "Admittedly here Bonaventure is thinking of contradictory opposites. This is the point of the objection: God cannot make a man to be a donkey or that white be black. Bonaventure is, therefore, not referring to a coincidence of mutually affirming complementarity." Up to this point Tavad and I agree. However, he takes his position one step further: "But this does not blunt the point I am making; for the principle of the excluded genus (God is not within any genus) extends to all opposites. God does not fall within the genus of mutually affirming opposites."¹² This is where Tavad and I part company. He has extended his reasoning beyond the principle on which it is based. As he himself has indicated, the texts which he has cited do not go directly counter to my position, since he acknowledges that Bonaventure's use of the term "opposites" is different from mine. Yet he claims that the principle of the excluded genus can be extended also to complementary opposites. This is precisely what I deny. I agree with Tavad and Bonaventure that God and creatures do not share a common genus. But this is precisely what makes the coincidence of complementary opposites possible in this case. This means that the argument between Tavad and myself rests not on explicit texts of Bonaventure but on

⁹ Tavad 579; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3, d. 2, a. 1, q. 1, ad 2.

¹⁰ Tavad 579; Bonaventure, *Sent.* 3, d. 1, a. 1, q. 1, 5.

¹¹ Tavad 579; Bonaventure, *Sent.* 3, d. 1, a. 1, q. 1, 5.

¹² Tavad 580.

Tavard's inference from those texts. Furthermore, he merely states his inference without giving evidence for it, either by stating explicit reasons or by drawing evidence from other texts of Bonaventure or from the structure of his thought. In my book I have cited many texts and presented extensive reasoning why I hold that the coincidence of complementary opposites is found throughout Bonaventure's thought, and specifically in the coincidence of God and the world.

By working through the texts cited by Tavard, we come to the heart of the issue as I see it. Behind these texts and my distinction lies Bonaventure's doctrine of exemplarity. It is precisely on this doctrine that I based my case for the coincidence of opposites of God and the world. I find it strange that Tavard did not allude to this in his criticism, since I devote a large portion of two chapters to this issue and present it again as one of the five classes of coincidence of opposites in Bonaventure's thought.¹³ Tavard does mention exemplarity once in his article as the basis for interpreting Bonaventure's doctrine of Christ the *medium* in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*. Tavard notes that Bonaventure's position, derived from Augustine, "depends on Bonaventure's understanding of the analogy of faith founded on divine exemplarity."¹⁴ I agree with Tavard on the role of exemplarity here and feel that it applies as well to the texts about God and the world which I analyzed from the *Itinerarium* and to the structure of Bonaventure's thought as a whole. That exemplarity is central to Bonaventure's thought is widely acknowledged by Bonaventure specialists. In fact, Bonaventure summed up his entire vision around exemplarity in a famous text from the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*: "This is our whole metaphysics: emanation, exemplarity, and consummation; that is, to be illumined by spiritual rays and to be led back to the highest reality. And thus you will be a true metaphysician."¹⁵ In the same context Bonaventure says that when one considers God from the standpoint of exemplarity, he does not share his task with the physicist or ethicist, but is a true metaphysician.¹⁶

The very next sentence situates exemplarity within the context of the Trinity: "For the Father from eternity generated the Son similar to Himself and expressed Himself and His likeness similar to Himself and with this His whole power; He said what He could make and especially what He wished to make and expressed all things in Him, that is, in His Son or in this *medium* as in His art."¹⁷ In generating the Son, the Father expresses in the Son His perfect Image; the Son is the expression of the

¹³ *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 114-30, 166-72, 201-2.

¹⁴ Tavard 582-83.

¹⁵ Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron* 1, 17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 1, 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

generative power of the Father and the vehicle of creation *ad extra*; for the Father expresses in the Son the ideas, forms, *rationes* of all that can be created *ad extra*. Thus the Son is both the Image of the Father and the Exemplar of creation. He is "the book written within and without."¹⁸ Because of exemplarity Bonaventure can say: "For these creatures are shadows, echoes, and pictures of that first, most powerful, most wise, and most perfect Principle, of that eternal Source, Light and Fulness, of that efficient, exemplary, and ordering Art."¹⁹ With precision Bonaventure divides creatures into various classes, according to their capacity to represent God: shadow, vestige, image, similitude.²⁰

Through exemplarity Bonaventure provides a metaphysical, theological grounding for the religious experience of Francis of Assisi, in which the latter perceived God reflected in creatures. In his biography of Francis, Bonaventure described this experience as follows: "Aroused by all things to the love of God, he [Francis] 'rejoiced' in all 'the works of the Lord's hands' (Ps 91:5) and from these joy-producing manifestations he rose to their life-giving principle and cause. In beautiful things he saw Beauty itself."²¹ It is this experience of Francis and Bonaventure's metaphysics of exemplarism that I attempted to interpret through the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity. Both from the standpoint of God's expressing Himself through creatures and the standpoint of our perceiving that expression in creatures, there is a complementary coming together of opposites. Can this be legitimately interpreted as a coincidence of opposites? I believe so. Although God and creatures do not share a common genus, they can be viewed as opposites, since they stand in different metaphysical realms. I must recall that I am not using the term "opposite" in the restrictive sense that Tavad did, but in a wider sense. Such a sense is not unique to myself, since Nicholas of Cusa did not hesitate to apply his notion of the coincidence of opposites to God and creation, nor more recently did Mircea Eliade.²² Although opposites, God and creatures come together, not by one absorbing the other—for that would produce monism—but by creatures expressing God through exemplarity.

The texts that Tavad marshaled against my position do not deal with

¹⁸ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 2, 11, 2; Ezek 2:9; cf. Rev 5:1.

¹⁹ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium* 2, 11.

²⁰ Cf. Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 1, d. 3, a. un., q. 2, ad 4; *Breviloquium* 2, 12, 1.

²¹ Bonaventure, *Legenda maior* 9, 1. Cf. also II Celano, 165.

²² Cf. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* 2; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958) 29; however, I point out in my book that the understanding of Cusa and that of Eliade on this point are not identical with Bonaventure's (cf. 222–27, 291 n. 36).

exemplarity, since they are concerned with the difference in the modes of being of God and creatures. But even here Bonaventure touches his doctrine of exemplarity. For in the text on the infinite difference between God and creatures, cited by Tavard, Bonaventure claims that "when it is said that every creature stands at an infinite distance from God, this is to be understood of distance through withdrawal from equality and participation in a third nature, since there can be nothing univocal between the creature and the Creator and in no way can the creature be equated with the Creator." Bonaventure continues: "But this is not true in the case of the distance which concerns the opposition that is appropriate to ordering and imitation. For the rational creature is immediately ordered to God and among creatures most expressively imitates God, and by reason of this assimilation and harmony has the nature of an image and a congruity for divine union."²³

According to Bonaventure, then, the infinite distance between God and creatures negates any univocal absorption. This is exactly what I mean by rejecting the monistic coincidence of opposites. But, according to Bonaventure, this does not negate the expression of God in creatures through exemplarity. In exemplarity we have an example of the coincidence of opposites of unity and difference; for the difference of metaphysical realms is maintained, but they are united through exemplaristic expression. The complementarity between God and creatures does not mean that creation *ad extra* is necessary. This Bonaventure emphatically denies. Rather, it means that if God freely chooses to create, creatures will express him appropriately because of the metaphysics of exemplarity, which in turn is based on the Trinitarian processions.

This brings us to the relation between exemplarity and the Incarnation. Tavard refers to distinction 6, a. 2, qq. 1 and 2 of Book 3 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, where Bonaventure examines various kinds of union and rejects them as models for the Incarnation. Again he cites a text from Bonaventure in which Bonaventure used the term *oppositio* and rules out its application here.²⁴ However, as in the previous case, Bonaventure is not using the term in the sense of complementary opposites. Tavard's major objection here is that "the union of the two

²³ Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3, d. 2, a. 1, q. 1, ad 2. Note that Bonaventure uses the term *oppositio* in this text; in the context its meaning corresponds to my understanding of complementary opposites.

²⁴ Tavard 581-82; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 3, d. 6, a. 2, q. 3, ad 4: Tavard states that Bonaventure's response "rules out 'illa unitas et multiplicatio quae habent aliquam oppositionem' (the unity and multiplicity which are somehow opposite). When such unity and multiplicity become one, 'minuitur oppositum cum suo opposito permiscetur' (Each opposite diminishes when it is mixed with the other)." Bonaventure is clearly not talking about a coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity.

natures in the Word Incarnate does not follow any created model, whether of nature or of grace."²⁵

I certainly do not hold that the Incarnation follows a created model or that the coincidence of opposites as I am using it is to be read exclusively as a created model. The fact that I apply it to the Trinity indicates that I do not conceive of it in that way. An essential dimension of my position is my distinction of five classes of the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity. The first three are pertinent here. The first concerns God Himself. Here, in the mystery of the persons, the opposition is not substantial but personal, based on mutual relations, which in turn are based on origin. Technical theological language has not hesitated to speak of *oppositio* here.²⁶ The second class is that of God and the world, which I treated above. Here there is opposition on the level of substance, but coincidence in exemplarity. The third class is the Incarnation. Here there is opposition in natures but union through the person of the Word. This union is unique and has no created model. Yet it can be seen as the pinnacle of a hierarchy. The intimacy of opposites here is greater than in any level of exemplarity: shadow, vestige, image, similitude. There is a type of "quantum leap" between exemplarity and the Incarnation. Yet the Incarnation fulfils on a new level of intimacy the exemplaristic structure of creation. The coincidence of opposites of complementarity can highlight that fulfilment. As in the case of the Trinity, we cannot grasp with reason how the coincidence is achieved, but we can perceive this coincidence in the light of faith.

It would be valuable here to draw upon the distinction in my book between philosophical and theological metaphysics. As I indicated, I am indebted to Zachary Hayes for this distinction, which is original to him and which I consider a major contribution to Bonaventure studies.²⁷ While acknowledging a distinction between philosophy and theology, Hayes links Bonaventure's theology with metaphysics—a metaphysics whose principles have been revealed in the mystery of Christ and the Trinity. This metaphysics is associated by Bonaventure with the self-diffusion of the good and the mediation between God and the world through the Trinitarian Word. Bonaventure's theological metaphysics completes his philosophical metaphysics by bringing the principles of the latter to full realization. For example, the philosophical metaphysics of

²⁵ Tavad 581.

²⁶ Cf. DS 1330 (703): *Decree for the Jacobites* of the Council of Florence. Cf. Anselm, *De processione Spiritus Sancti*, c. 1 (critical text, S. Anselmi opera omnia, ed. Franciscus Schmidt, Vol. 2 [Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946] 180).

²⁷ Cf. Zachary Hayes, "Christology and Metaphysics in the Thought of Bonaventure," *JR* 58 (1978) S82–S96; see my response *ibid.* S97–S104; also my use of his notion in *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 10–15.

exemplarity is fulfilled in the revelation of the theological metaphysics of Trinitarian expressionism, which is its ultimate ground. The coming together of God and the world found in the philosophical metaphysics of exemplarity is brought to an entirely new level of intimacy in the theological metaphysics of the Incarnation. Although the inner life of the Trinity, the expression of God in creation, and the hypostatic union exist in three different realms, they share in their own way the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity, effected in each case through the person of the Word.

In the light of this, I find that the following statement of Tavad does not reflect a precise reading of my position: "It is, therefore, a misreading of Bonaventure's theology of the Incarnation to present Christ as the center of a coincidence of opposites, models of which would pervade the entire universe and all religions."²⁸ My point is that the exemplaristic coincidence of opposites pervades the entire universe. The Incarnation is related to it as its fulfilment, but on a unique plane. The way in which the mystery of the Incarnation is related to other religions is a complex question which I only touch in my book. Although I hold that different forms of the coincidence of opposites are found in world religions, I do not claim that they follow the model of the Incarnation, as such. To look upon Christ, however, from the standpoint of the coincidence of opposites opens an avenue into the study of the relation of Christianity to world religions on precisely this point.

It is this avenue that I am trying to open through my book, not merely into world religions but into Jungian psychology. I was not so much trying to marshal evidence for my position from Jung and other religions, but to tap traditions that used the coincidence of opposites as a means of interpretation. Since Western Christian theology has not employed the coincidence of opposites in a prominent way, it is valuable to draw from other traditions that have. By bringing Bonaventure into dialogue with these traditions, I believe that mutual enlightenment can ensue. However, I realize that, as Tavad has said, "appeal to Jungian archetypes to explain the theology of Bonaventure can only satisfy those who are already convinced of Jung's hypothesis."²⁹ My position must stand on its own. That is why I employed the twofold method of analysis of specific texts and analysis of the structure of Bonaventure's thought. If my analyses have been correct, then they naturally lead to a dialogue with other traditions that have systematically used the coincidence of opposites as a vehicle of interpretation.

I believe that these remarks touch the major points of disagreement between Tavad and myself. Several minor points can be seen in the light of what I have said above.

²⁸ Tavad 582.

²⁹ Tavad 578.

BÉRUBÉ'S CRITICISM: THE PERSON OF THE FATHER

Bérubé's article is not devoted exclusively to my book, but deals with the relation of philosophy and theology in Bonaventure, taking as a major theme the issue of philosophical and theological metaphysics as developed by Hayes. In this context Bérubé devotes a substantial section of the article to my thesis on the coincidence of opposites in Bonaventure. Unlike Tavard, he directs his chief criticism to my treatment of the Father in the Trinity rather than to Christology.

Bérubé points out an apparent discrepancy in my evaluation of different spheres of the coincidence of opposites in Bonaventure, since I seem to give primacy both to the coincidence of opposites in the Father and in Christ.³⁰ But this can easily be clarified according to my twofold method. According to my systematic analysis of Bonaventure's thought, the coincidence of opposites in the Father is foundational; it is at the base of his system. I sum up this position as follows: "The coincidence of opposites which operates throughout his system is ultimately rooted in his affirming the coincidence of innascibility and fecundity in the Father."³¹ Later in the book I say: "I believe that in the genesis of Bonaventure's thought the awareness of Christ as the coincidence of opposites has priority and is the source of the awareness of the coincidence of opposites in the other spheres."³² As I indicate, this priority is not a structural priority within Bonaventure's system, but a priority in the genesis of his thought as this is expressed in the explicit texts on the coincidence of opposites, e.g., in the *Itinerarium*. But there is another way in which I see Christ as primary, namely, as the fulness and completion of the coincidence of opposites throughout Bonaventure's system. As incarnate Word, Christ brings the coincidence of creation and divinity into a new level through the hypostatic union, as I discussed in my treatment of the relation of exemplarity to the Incarnation in my response to Tavard.

Bérubé's criticism of my position is less radical than Tavard's. His chief textual disagreement is with my interpretation of Bonaventure's treatment, in Book 1 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, of the Father's personal properties of innascibility and paternity. I see these as opposites; Bérubé does not.³³ Innascibility means that the Father is without source; paternity, that He generates the Son and spirates the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure claims that the Father "generates because He is God innascible; and He spirates because He is nonprocessible."³⁴ My interpre-

³⁰ Bérubé 62.

³¹ *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 104.

³² *Ibid.* 135.

³³ Bérubé 62-66; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 1, d. 27, p. 1, a. un., q. 2, ad 3.

³⁴ Bonaventure, loc. cit.

tation of this extended section of Bonaventure is as follows:

Bonaventure here is operating according to the coincidence of opposites, for he is uniting as opposites two personal properties which tradition has assigned to the Father: innascibility and paternity. Bonaventure interprets these as opposites which not only coexist but which mutually require each other. As *innascibilis*, the Father is unborn, unbegotten; he has no origin, no source. As unbegotten, he begets the Son so that in the Trinity there are polar opposites: the unbegotten and the begotten. The mediating element between the unbegottenness of the Father and the begottenness of the Son is the paternity of the Father: that is, his power to generate. But does this power to generate flow out of his unbegottenness? Bonaventure answers in the affirmative. In the technical terminology of the schools, innascibility is not merely a negative notion, but includes within it the positive note of generating fecundity. Thus the Father begets precisely because he is unbegotten. Such a mutual interpenetration, which is a mutual affirmation, is an example of the type of coincidence of opposites we described above as characteristic of Bonaventure's thought.³⁵

Bérubé does not see innascibility and paternity as opposites; he reads innascibility to mean fecundity. It is true that Bonaventure links innascibility and fecundity by claiming that innascibility is not to be read merely negatively but that it implies a positive content: fecundity. However, I claim that Bonaventure does not reduce innascibility to fecundity but sees that one requires the other. In his analysis of the formal content of concepts, we do not have merely one formality but two; and these two formalities are intimately related. This intimate relation of the two is what I mean by the coincidence of opposites of mutually affirming complementarity. Innascibility requires fecundity, and fecundity requires innascibility. To reach that point of intersection, one can proceed from two sides: from the negative side of innascibility or the positive side of fecundity. In the text under consideration Bonaventure proceeds from both sides. Since the Father is from no one, He has the fulness of perfection of fecundity. From the positive side, i.e., from the fecundity of the Trinitarian processions, we can proceed from the Holy Spirit and the Son back to the Father as Their source. In this direction we ultimately come to the same point, namely, that the Father is first, and this means from no one; therefore He is *innascibilis*. At this point innascibility and fecundity coincide. Because we are dealing here with the scholastic analysis of the formalities of concepts, this may appear a subtle matter; but if my interpretation is situated against the background of Greek Trinitarian theology, as expressed by the Pseudo Dionysius, who influenced Bonaventure, it gains considerable support.³⁶

³⁵ *Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites* 103-4.

³⁶ Cf. Pseudo Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 2.

Bérubé proceeds to show that it is only in the text under discussion that Bonaventure derives the divine fecundity from innascibility and in other key texts from simplicity, perfection, and primacy. For example, in dist. 2 of Book 3 of the *Commentary on the Sentences*, Bonaventure “proposes that the attribute which renders the divine essence communicable is simplicity.”³⁷ The *Breviloquium* introduces another principle of explanation: since the first principle is most perfect, it communicates most perfectly. In the *De mysterio Trinitatis* Bonaventure has recourse to the notion of primacy as the basis for fecundity.³⁸ Bérubé summarizes the heart of his objection: “The whole argument of Bonaventure is grounded not on the grammatical sense of innascibility, which means *non esse ab alio*, but on the positive sense, which is of being the *first* productive principle: ‘et non esse ab alio est esse primum.’”³⁹ Bérubé reads innascible as a mere grammatical device and weights Bonaventure’s position on the side of fecundity. It is clear that in the other texts he cites, Bonaventure does not arrive at the fecundity through innascibility. Yet in this major text in the *Commentary on the Sentences* he does. I see absolutely no reason to read Bonaventure’s use of innascibility here as merely grammatical, even though he does not repeat this approach elsewhere. I feel that this is another example of the type of argument used against my position: to call a statement of Bonaventure merely grammatical or merely rhetorical when it is, in my opinion, a strong statement and supported by the structure of his thought as a whole.

Bérubé sums up his position as follows: “There are no other texts where Saint Bonaventure mentions innascibility in connection with the Trinitarian processions. This is, then, too meagre for founding a theory of the coincidence of opposites. Bonaventure’s Christology offers a more solid foundation.”⁴⁰ I am grateful for his acknowledgement of the significance of Christology here. But I would like to say that I do not ground my interpretation of the coincidence of opposites on the notion of the innascibility of the Father. In fact, I see the coincidence of opposites most clearly in the Trinitarian processions, which neither Tavard nor Bérubé alluded to, as well as in Christology. My point is this: if I read Bonaventure’s treatment of the person of the Father accurately, then this is the intrinsic foundation of his system of opposites. If I am wrong on this point, the coincidence of opposites still stands on the basis of the Trinitarian processions and the other realms of Bonaventure’s thought.⁴¹

³⁷ Bérubé 63; Bonaventure, *Commentary on the Sentences* 1, d. 2, a. un., q. 3.

³⁸ Bérubé 63–65; Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* 1, 3; *De mysterio Trinitatis* 8.

³⁹ Bérubé 65.

⁴⁰ Bérubé 66.

⁴¹ Zachary Hayes is in basic agreement with me in his interpretation of innascibility; cf. his introduction to his translation of Bonaventure’s *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio*

In conclusion, I am grateful for the interest that Tavard and Bérubé have taken in my book and for the opportunity to clarify my position in the face of their criticisms. Since I wrote my book, my thought has evolved, not by moving away from my original position but by extending it. After completing the manuscript for my book, I translated Bonaventure's biography of St. Francis, the *Legenda maior*, for the Bonaventure volume in the Paulist Press series *The Classics of Western Spirituality*.⁴² By immersing myself in the life of Francis and in Bonaventure's interpretation of that life, I became aware of an even deeper coincidence of opposites: that of fulness and emptiness. Emptiness appears in Francis' desire to imitate Christ in his poverty and passion, and fulness in the spiritual gifts he was granted and in his rejoicing in the reflection of God in creation. At this point I am convinced that fulness and emptiness are the ultimate opposites in the Christian life and vision—on the level of spirituality, metaphysics, theology, and mysticism. Although I touched these opposites in my book, I emphasized the coincidence of opposites from the standpoint of fulness. I believe that this was correct, since this is Bonaventure's emphasis. Now, inspired by Francis, I am in the process of a detailed analysis of the coincidence of fulness and emptiness in the Christian vision. To do this thoroughly, I will have to move away from an exclusive study of Bonaventure's texts to take into account other writers for whom the apophatic way is more thematized. As a step in that direction, I have begun with an article entitled "Fulness and Emptiness in Bonaventure and Eckhart."⁴³ I hope that this approach will not only illumine Christian theology and spirituality but will lead further into the dialogue of world religions by entering more deeply into their spiritual experiences.

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Trinitatis: Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity (St. Bonaventure, N.Y.: Franciscan Institute, 1979) 41. Concerning the significance of the section in Bonaventure that deals with innascibility, he observes: "That we are here dealing with a particular concern of Bonaventure is reflected not only in the content but also in the length of the treatment given to the question in the Sentence Commentary" (*ibid.*, n. 50).

⁴² *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis* (New York: Paulist, 1978) 179-327.

⁴³ Soon to appear in the journal *Dharma*.