

Theological points from ps-dionysius critical thinking example

[Religion](#), [God](#)



Introduction: Bonaventure and Ps-Dionysius

Ascent of the soul

God is the cause of all things

Love, prayer and union with God

Conclusion

Discussion prompts 2: Franciscans, Ascent, Apophaticism and Kataphaticism.

Bonaventure was one of the later theologians to advance the Franciscans tradition, together with Robert Grosseteste and after John Scottus Eriugena (Corrigan and Harrington 1). Ps-Dionysius the Areopagite was quite a notable influence in Saint Bonaventure's writings, philosophically and theologically.

Bonaventure referred to Ps-Dionysius as the " prince of mystics". Saint Bonaventure advanced the Platonizing and mystical mode of speculation just like Ps-Dionysius. To Bonaventure, the intellectual element is pure, always present and inferior to the heart (affections power). Bonaventure began by showing the relation between faith and reason (Noone and Houser 1).

In the mind's or soul's journey to God, Bonaventure suggested three ways.

Firstly, through vestiges and shadows (non-intellectual creatures)

(Bonaventure 76). Secondly, through God's likenesses and images

(intellectual creatures). Finally, through the route of being. Likewise, Ps-

Dionysius views Bonaventure's " non-intellectual creatures" as sensible

beings and the " intellectual creatures" as intelligible beings. In the route of

being, Bonaventure just like Ps-Dionysius believed that God was a simple,

perfect absolute being that caused all things to exist. Therefore,

Bonaventure uses and elaborates on the ascent of the soul using a seraph

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with six wings (Bonaventure 54; Prologue 2 and 3). While holding Ps-Dionysius view that the soul moves from the sensible realm to the intelligible realm and finally into the darkness (mystical (hidden) union with God) (Bonaventure 116). Ps-Dionysius says that God's work (theurgy) is a summation of His word (theology). It does not destroy science, nature, contemplation or morality but completes them and divinized human nature (Pseudo-Dionysius 198). The Godhead is the cause of all things; He is "all in all" (Pseudo-Dionysius 79). According to Bonaventure, sciences find their apprehension and reception in the divine illumination of theology (Noone and Houser 1).

Ps-Dionysius delves into God's ecstatic love (Eros), affection (agapesis) and goodness for all beings (Pseudo-Dionysius 60). His writings prepare the soul for worship, praise and prayer to receive the divine love of God (Pseudo-Dionysius 194-261). Ps-Dionysius believed that man attains perfection through contemplation and mystical union with God. All the above ideas were held, advocated for and advanced by Bonaventure. Bonaventure believed that, for the soul to attain full contemplation and union with God it has to exercise virtues, employ prayer and accept the divine light and meditation (Bonaventure 51-117). To him, the end of the soul (life) is union, contemplation (intellect) or love, which cannot be fully attained but it is just a future hope. They both believed that prayer is the primary form of philosophical thought, receptivity and reverence.

Like Ps-Dionysius, Bonaventure explores the meaning and nature of the divine attributes. In the Divine Names, Ps-Dionysius critically examines the names and attributes of God, both kataphatic and apophatic theology

(Pseudo-Dionysius 47-132). He offers a theological representation (hypotuposis) and symbolic theology. The Godhead distinguished into persons (hypostasis) like “ Holy Spirit”, “ Son” and “ Father”. The Godhead also has attributes such as “ source”, “ intellect”, “ light” and “ Father of lights” (Pseudo-Dionysius 145). We find Bonaventure using the same attributes as “ intellect”, “ light” and “ source” (Bonaventure 76). He uses persons like “ Father”, “ Father of lights” and “ son” (Bonaventure 53; prologue 1). Ps- Bonaventure uses Dionysius’ prefixes “ over-”, “ hyper-”, “ pro-” and “ pre-” before the names and attributes of God (Pseudo-Dionysius 47-132). Bonaventure elaborates Ps-Dionysius’ view that before humans can understand the names, truths and attributes of God in their purest form, they must first relate them to visible things that their intellect can readily understand. To Bonaventure and Ps-Dionysius, the scriptures provide a deeper understanding, beyond human capacity, of the attribution or predication of God.

In conclusion, Bonaventure uses Ps-Dionysius’ attributions and persons of God (both kataphatic and apophatic theology). Secondly, he uses Dionysius’ model of prayer and union with God. Thirdly, Bonaventure uses Ps-Dionysius’ concept of God is the cause of all things. Finally, Bonaventure employs Dionysius’ notion of the ascent of the soul. Although Bonaventure uses different symbols and examples, the notions displayed in his writings have a firm footing in Ps-Dionysius’ works.

Works Cited

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