

CONTENTS

TEXTS

- "Aliud benitenciale": The Ninth-Century *Paenitentiale Vindobonense C*
Rob Meens 1
- Variations on a Theme Attributed to Robert Holcot: Lessons for Late-
 Medieval English Preaching from the Castle of Prudence
Alan J. Fletcher 27

ARTICLES

- The *Laus Beatissime Virginis* and the Canon of Alexander Neckam
Christopher J. McDonough 99
- Transcendence, Power, Virtue, Madness, Ecstasy—Modalities of
 Excess in Aquinas *Peter A. Kwasniewski* 129
- Dante in Ecstasy: *Paradiso* 33 and Bernard of Clairvaux
Richard Kay 183
- Passion Devotion, Penitential Reading, and the Manuscript Page: "The
 Hours of the Cross" in London, British Library Additional 37049
Marlene Villalobos Hennessy 213
- The Title "Grand Prince" in Kievan Rus' *Martin Dimnik* 253
- Fibonacci, Teacher of Algebra: An Analysis of Chapter 15.3 of *Liber*
Abbaci *Barnabas Hughes* 313

MEDIAEVALIA

- John Purvey and John of Gaunt's Third Marriage
Richard Firth Green 363

TRANSCENDENCE, POWER, VIRTUE, MADNESS, ECSTASY— MODALITIES OF EXCESS IN AQUINAS

Peter A. Kwasniewski

A well-known characteristic of St. Thomas as a thinker is his pursuit of commonality within diversity by unfolding structures of analogous predication. Whether the terms be transcendentals such as being, one, good, or true, qualitative perfections such as wisdom or justice, or fundamental concepts such as act and potency, motion and rest, he strives to articulate a core meaning that can be employed in different situations, applied to diverse objects. And there is still room for amazement when one sees just how conatural an approach and how thorough a process this is for Aquinas. Not only the major metaphysical candidates but a whole host of their lesser attendants receive this honorable treatment. In the present article, I wish to draw attention to the network of meanings Thomas discerns in—and at the same time feels confident to invest in—the vocabulary of *excessus*. While single meanings of *excessus* have attracted attention (for example, its role in discussions of the nature of God and his transcendence over creation), no one has written a study of the whole range of "modalities of excess." This article is intended as a preliminary investigation of the topic, a road-map of the territory covered by the language, identifying major points of interest. I hope to show that it constitutes an intriguing, if modest, province in the larger kingdom of analogies, and well repays a visit.

It is only to be expected that a fairly common noun like *excessus* and the verb from which it is formed, *excedere*, will have a broad range of applications.¹ Although Thomas never takes it upon himself to order the meanings

¹ For more common uses of *excessus*, I shall quote only representative passages. Existing English translations render *excessus* and *excedere* with a variety of near-synonyms—"exceed," of course, but also "surpass," "transcend," "excel," and "go beyond." I will usually write "excess" and "exceed" to make plain the underlying connections. Unless otherwise noted, original texts are from the Leonine critical edition, cited by volume and page number. Translations are either my own or are based upon the following: *Catena aurea: A Commentary on the Four Gospels*, vol. 3: *St. Luke*, trans. Thomas D. Ryder, ed. J. H. Newman (London, 1842; rpt. Southampton, 1997); *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago, 1964; rpt. Notre Dame, 1995); *Commentary on Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. C. I.

per prius et posterius, as he does with other key terms when, for example, he arrives at the philosophical lexicon of the fifth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*,² it is possible to distinguish areas of usage which have a common core meaning. Whenever one thing surpasses or goes beyond another or is surpassed or gone beyond by another, we have an instance of *excessus*, just as when one thing falls short of another or is fallen short of by another, we have an instance of *defectus*.³ All excess is according to some quantity, whether dimensive or virtual, i.e., quantity of body or quantity of power.⁴ The *ratio* of excess consists in magnitude.⁵ As one would therefore expect, *excessus* and its verbal forms are often used in their most literal sense, viz., as regards bodily quantity and measurement. Four is in excess of three; the weight of lead exceeds the weight of wood; the velocity of a galloping horse exceeds that of a running man. Thus we read in the *Metaphysics* commentary:

Heaviness and rapidity have something in common with their contraries—namely, because one contrary is found in the other; for the heavy is in some way light, and the reverse; and what is rapid is in some way slow. For each of these terms is twofold. In one way, said absolutely, as “heavy” is said of anything that has an inclination to be borne towards the center, without taking into

Litzinger (Chicago, 1964; rpt. Notre Dame, 1993); *Disputed Questions on Truth*, vol. 3 (qq. 21–29), trans. Robert W. Schmidt (Chicago, 1952; rpt. Albany, 1993); *Exposition of Aristotle's Treatise on the Heavens*, trans. F. R. Larcher and Pierre H. Conway, 2 vols. (Columbus, 1964); *On Kingship*, trans. Gerald B. Phelan, revised by I. Thomas Eschmann, *Mediaeval Sources in Translation* 2 (Toronto, 1949; rpt. 1982); *Summa theologiae*, trans. English Dominicans (London, 1911–36; rpt. New York, 1947–48); *Treatise on Separate Substances*, trans. Francis J. Lescoe (West Hartford, 1963).

² *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* [*In Metaphys.*] 5.1 n.749 (Marietti, 208): “In praecedenti libro determinavit Philosophus quid pertineat ad considerationem huius scientiae; hic incipit determinare de rebus, quas scientia ista considerat. Et quia ea quae in hac scientia considerantur, sunt omnibus communia, nec dicuntur univoce, sed secundum prius et posterius de diversis, ut in quarto libro est habitum; ideo prius distinguit intentiones nominum, quae in huius scientiae consideratione cadunt. Secundo incipit determinare de rebus, quae sub consideratione huius scientiae cadunt, in sexto libro.”

³ Hence, *excessus* can simply signify abundance—there is more than enough for everyone, goods are present “in excess”—as when Thomas explains two features of the heavenly city: *Super secundam epistolam ad Thessalonicenses lectura* [*Super Thes.*; likewise for all references to the scriptural commentaries] 1.2 n.20 (Marietti, 2:195): “Gloriam sanctorum commendat, et quantum ad essentiam, per participationem gloriae Dei, cum dicit glorificari, etc., et quantum ad eius excessum, ibi et admirabilis.”

⁴ *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, lib. IV [*IV Sent.*] 49.2.3 (Busa, 1:685c): “Excessus autem omnis est secundum aliquam quantitatem.” I will discuss shortly the relevance of the distinction between dimensive and virtual quantity. *I–III Sent.* and *IV Sent.* 1–22 will be cited by page number from the Mandonnet and Moos edition (Paris, 1929, 1933, 1947); *IV Sent.* 23 ff. will be cited by volume, page, and column number from the Busa edition.

⁵ *Summa theologiae* [*ST*] 2-2.134.1 (10:89).

consideration how much it has of such an inclination; and in this sense “heavy” does not refer to the genus of quantity, nor is it susceptible to being measured. In another way, “heavy” is said by way of comparison with another, namely, what exceeds another in the aforesaid inclination; as when we say that earth is heavy in comparison with water, and lead in comparison with wood. It is therefore by reason of this excess that some notion of quantity and measure is found. Similarly, “rapid” is spoken of in two ways. In one way absolutely, of anything that has any motion. In another way, of something that has an excess of motion. And in one way the notion of quantity and measure properly apply to it, in the other way they do not.⁶

The quantitative meaning of *excessus* is adapted to other contexts, too, as when Thomas joins Aristotle in criticizing those who claim that the species of things are numbers: “for it will follow [from this position] that diverse species do not differ substantially, but only according to the excess of one species over another,”⁷ as though *res naturales* were a gradual continuum of accidentally distinct items rather than a graded hierarchy of essentially distinct natures. Yet things are intimately connected with number, for they are constituted in “number, weight, and measure” by the divine Wisdom (cf. *Wisdom* 11:20), and their natural forms and proper definitions have the distinctness and immutability of integers.⁸

THE DIVINE EXCESSUS BEYOND ALL KNOWING

The steady climb from the creaturely excessiveness we are familiar with to the uncreated excess proper to God is neatly outlined in a passage of Aquinas's

⁶ *In Metaphys.* 10.2 n.1942 (Marietti, 465–66): “Gravitas et velocitas habent aliquid commune in contrariis, quia scilicet in uno contrariorum invenitur alterum: nam grave est aliquo modo leve, et e converso; et velox est aliquo modo tardum. Utrumque enim eorum est duplex. Sicut grave, uno modo dicitur absolute, scilicet quod habet inclinationem ut feratur ad medium, sine hoc quod consideretur quantum habeat de tali inclinatione: et sic non pertinet ad genus quantitatis, nec competit ei mensurari. Alio modo dicitur grave per comparisonem ad aliud, scilicet quod excedit alterum in inclinatione praedicta; ut scilicet dicamus, quod terra est gravis in comparatione ad aquam, et plumbum in comparatione ad lignum. Sic igitur ratione huius excessus, invenitur aliqua ratio quantitatis et mensurae. Et similiter velox dicitur dupliciter. Uno modo absolute, scilicet quod habet motum quemcumque. Et alio modo quod habet excessum motus. Et uno modo competit sibi ratio quantitatis et mensurae. Alio modo non.”

⁷ *In Metaphys.* 1.16 n.246 (Marietti, 72): “quia sequitur quod diversae species non differant secundum substantiam, sed solum secundum excessum unius speciei super aliam.”

⁸ *Summa contra gentiles* [*SCG*] 1.54 (13:154, *Ut enim*); also *SCG* 3.97; *ST* 1.5.5, 47.2, and 76.3. Thomas invariably quotes the Aristotelian dictum that “the forms of things are like numbers” (see *Metaphys.* 8.3 [1043b32–1044a14]). Quotations throughout are taken from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1984).

commentary on the Pseudo-Dionysian *On the Divine Names*.⁹ The matter of inquiry is why, and how, the name "great" may be applied to God. Thomas first notes the different ways in which *excessus*, which *magnus* implies, is found in creatures. These ways are then stretched to the infinite, as befits God:

He [Dionysius] attributes the name "great" to him, according to a certain *ratio* of likeness: first, as regards his substance; second, as regards his effects. Now it is manifest that "great" is attributed to creatures according to the *ratio* of excess: for those things are called great which are found to exceed others. Excess in created things, however, can be looked at in several ways. In one way, according to the dimensions of length, breadth, and depth; and according to this, something is said to be "great" in comparison to another, insofar as it super-exceeds its quantity; and thus God is called "great" simply speaking, insofar as his greatness is spread out and super-extended beyond every magnitude; and "spread out" is said by way of a likeness to humid things, like air and water, while "super-extended" by way of a likeness to dry and solid bodies. In another way, excess in created things can be looked at according to place, and thus a place is said to be greater which contains more. Hence, [in this way too] God is called "great" simply, insofar as he contains all places. Third, excess is found in things according to number, and in this way too God is called "great" simply, insofar as he surpasses every number, because every number proceeds from the divine Wisdom that distinguishes things, in whose power it is to produce the many differences of things. Now among things, that seems to be most infinite which exceeds everything. But nothing found among created things is termed "infinite" in such a way that it fails to be in some respect finite, namely, according to species.¹⁰

⁹ For a thorough treatment of Thomas's debt to and appropriation of the works of Dionysius, see Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden, 1992).

¹⁰ *In librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio* [DDN] 9.1 nn.805–6 (Marietti, 301): "Attribuit ei magnum, secundum quamdam rationem similitudinis: et primo, quantum ad eius substantiam; secundo, quantum ad eius effectus. Manifestum est autem quod magnum creaturis attribuitur, secundum rationem excessus: illa enim magna dicuntur quae inveniuntur alia excedere. Excessus autem in rebus creatis multipliciter attenditur: uno modo, secundum dimensionem longitudinis, latitudinis et profunditatis; et secundum hoc, dicitur aliquid magnum respectu alterius in quantum superexcedit quantitatem eius; et sic Deus dicitur magnus simpliciter, in quantum magnitudo eius extra omnem magnitudinem est superfusa et superextenta; et dicitur superfusa ad similitudinem rerum humidarum, ut aeris et aquae; superextenta vero ad similitudinem corporum siccorum et solidorum. Alio modo, attenditur excessus in rebus creatis, secundum locum et sic locus dicitur esse maior, qui est magis continens. Unde et Deus dicitur simpliciter magnus, in quantum continet omnem locum. Tertio, excessus invenitur in rebus secundum numerum et sic etiam dicitur Deus magnus simpliciter, in quantum superegreditur numerum omnem, quia omnis numerus a divina sapientia procedit res distinguente, in cuius potentia est plures rerum differentias producere. Videtur autem in rebus maximum infinitum esse quod omnia excedit. Sed, ut in rebus creatis invenitur, nihil dicitur infinitum quin sit secundum aliquid finitum, scilicet secundum speciem."

God exceeds all created being, for he is contained by no place but present in every place. He is not differentiated in a finite manner, as are natural things by their number-like forms, but contains in himself the numerical diversity of all things in a perfect simplicity. It is for this reason that God most of all deserves the name "one": "'One' is attributed to God . . . because he himself is all-unitive according to the excess of his singular unity."¹¹ This meaning of *excessus* is entirely positive, indicating pre-eminence in perfection, maximal being, that which is greatest in some genus or altogether transcends a genus as its principle; and this is the intended meaning when Thomas speaks of a knowledge of God *per excessum*, as will be evident in what follows.

In a more extended sense, *excessus* is found in powers (capacities, abilities) or in natural processes, where the power or process is understood to have definite boundaries which can be either fallen short of or surpassed; on the other side, an object which is disproportionate to a power is said to exceed that power. Commenting on Psalm 50:9, "The uncertain and hidden things of thy wisdom thou hast made manifest to me," Thomas mentions both excess and defect in regard to man's power of knowing:

Something can be known to be true of God which nonetheless remains unknown to us for two reasons—either on account of a defect or on account of an excess. On account of defect, something which depends on the future is unknown by us, because [for us] it does not yet have determinate truth. On account of excess, the divine substance is unknown by us, and [any other] things which exceed our capacity.¹²

Excessus in reference to dimensive quantity and measurement is not infrequently paralleled by a reference to another sort of quantity, namely, that of power (*quantitas virtutis* or *virtualis*)—how much active potency a power has for operation.¹³ A clear example of such a parallel arises in the context of a

¹¹ DDN 13.2 n.971 (Marietti, 363): "Unum attribuitur Deo . . . quia ipse est omnia unitive secundum excessum suae singularis unitatis. . ."

¹² *Postilla super Psalmos* [Super Ps.] 50.4 (Busa, 6:125a): "In nobis est aliquid ignotum dupliciter, quod tamen est de Deo notum. Aut propter defectum est nobis aliquid ignotum, aut propter excessum. Propter defectum est nobis ignotum aliquid futurum contingens: quia nondum habet determinatam veritatem. Propter excessum est nobis ignota divina substantia, et quae excedunt capacitatem nostram." Cf. *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* [DV] 12.2 (22:370–72). Although the *Postilla super Psalmos* is a *reportatio* surviving in few manuscripts and as yet imperfectly edited, it is a valuable source of Thomas's thought on many topics, as Thomas F. Ryan demonstrates in *Thomas Aquinas as Reader of the Psalms* (Notre Dame, 2000). The text of the Busa edition is derived from the Parma edition, supplemented by the *lectiones* Uccelli published in 1880.

¹³ On the notions of *virtus* and virtual quantity, see O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 155–85.

discussion of the manner in which quantity is found in the threeness of the divine Persons:

Quantity is twofold. One is called "quantity of mass" or "dimensive quantity," which is found in corporeal things only, and so has no place in the Divine Persons. But the other is called "quantity of power" [*virtutis*], which is seen in connection with the perfection of some nature or form. It is this [latter sort of] quantity which is signified when something is said to be "more" or "less" warm, inasmuch as it is more perfect or less perfect as regards hotness. Such quantity of power [*virtualis*] is seen first of all at its root, that is, in the very perfection of the form or nature, and thus one speaks of "spiritual greatness," as one speaks of heat as "great" because of its intensity and perfection. And thus Augustine says in *De Trinitate* VI that "in those things which are great not by reason of their mass, that thing is greater which is better"; for the more perfect is what one calls "better." Secondly, however, quantity of power [*virtualis*] is seen in the effects of form. And the first effect of form is *being* [*esse*], for every thing has being in accordance with its form. The second effect is *operation*, for every agent acts by virtue of its form. Thus, quantity of power is seen as regards being and as regards operation; as regards being, inasmuch as those things which are of a more perfect nature have a greater duration; and as regards operation, inasmuch as those things which are of a more perfect nature are more powerful as regards action.¹⁴

Explaining the meaning of *comprehendere* in reference to the soul's cognitive powers, Thomas in the commentary on the *Sentences* employs the same distinction to articulate the limits of man's knowledge of God:

"To comprehend" means, as it were, "to grasp all at once," i.e., to lay hold of; and therefore something is properly comprehended when it is laid hold of all at once, i.e., with everything that belongs to it. Hence, it is necessary that every comprehended thing be enclosed within the one comprehending. Prop-

¹⁴ *ST* 1.42.1 ad 1 (4:435–36): "Duplex est quantitas. Una scilicet quae dicitur quantitas molis, vel quantitas dimensiva, quae in solis rebus corporalibus est: unde in divinis personis locum non habet. Sed alia est quantitas virtutis, quae attenditur secundum perfectionem alicuius naturae vel formae: quae quidem quantitas designatur secundum quod dicitur aliquid magis vel minus calidum, in quantum est perfectius vel minus perfectum in caliditate. Huiusmodi autem quantitas virtualis attenditur primo quidem in radice, idest in ipsa perfectione formae vel naturae: et sic dicitur magnitudo spiritualis, sicut dicitur magnus calor propter suam intensionem et perfectionem. Et ideo dicit Augustinus, VI de Trin., quod in his quae non mole magna sunt, hoc est maius esse, quod est melius esse: nam melius dicitur quod perfectius est. Secundo autem attenditur quantitas virtualis in effectibus formae. Primus autem effectus formae est esse: nam omnis res habet esse secundum suam formam. Secundus autem effectus est operatio: nam omne agens agit per suam formam. Attenditur igitur quantitas virtualis et secundum esse, et secundum operationem: secundum esse quidem, in quantum ea quae sunt perfectioris naturae, sunt maioris durationis; secundum operationem vero, in quantum ea quae sunt perfectioris naturae, sunt magis potentia ad agendum" (translated by Lawrence Dewan).

erly [speaking], however, content is enclosed within a container; and therefore it is necessary that what is comprehended be contained in the one comprehending. Now, just as something bodily is said to be contained in another because it does not exceed any of the container's bounds according to dimensive quantity, as wine in a cask, so something is said to be contained by another spiritually when it stands under its power and in no way exceeds that [container]. And therefore something is said to be comprehended by knowledge when the thing known stands under the act of the knowing power and does not exceed it.

All excess, however, is according to some quantity. According to this quantity, a knowable thing is said to exceed the knowing power according as it is knowable by that [power]. Now a sensible thing is known both according to dimensive quantity (because the sense-power in knowing uses a bodily organ, by reason of which it knows all sensibles that are reduced to dimensive quantity) and according to quantity of power (as is evident in proper sensibles, which are qualities), and therefore even the comprehension of sense is impeded both on account of excess in dimensive quantity (as it is impeded from comprehending the whole earth), and on account of excess in quantity of power (as there is not so much power in the eye for knowing as there is brightness in the sun to be known).

In contrast, an intelligible thing is not known by the intellect under the *ratio* of dimensive quantity except *per accidens*, insofar namely as it receives from sensation, from which it follows that it understands along with the continuous; and according to this, the intellect is impeded from the comprehension of an intelligible thing on account of [its] excess of quantity, just as it is impeded from comprehending an infinite line or number. But speaking *per se*, an intelligible thing is compared to the intellect according to the *ratio* of the quantity of power, by the very fact that the proper object of the intellect is a "what"; and therefore in those things which are separated from sense, the intellect's comprehension is not impeded except by an excess of quantity of power; and this is when the intelligible is [something] more knowable than the intellect knows or can know.¹⁵

¹⁵ *IV Sent.* 49.2.3 (Busa, 1:685c–686a): "Comprehendere dicitur quasi simul prendere, idest capere; et ideo illud proprie comprehenditur quod simul capitur, idest cum omnibus quae ejus sunt. Unde oportet quod omne comprehensum includatur in comprehendente; includitur autem proprie contentum in continente; et ideo oportet comprehensum contineri in comprehendente. Sicut autem dicitur corporaliter aliquid in altero contineri, quia non excedit continens ex ulla parte secundum quantitatem dimensionem, ut vinum in dolio; ita dicitur contineri aliquid ab aliquo spiritualiter, quod substat virtuti ejus, et in nullo excedit ipsum. Et ideo tunc dicitur aliquid per cognitionem comprehendendi, quando cognitum stat sub actu virtutis cognoscitivae, et non excedit ipsam.

Excessus autem omnis est secundum aliquam quantitatem. Secundum hanc autem quantitatem dicitur cognoscibile excedere potentiam cognoscitivam, secundum quam cognoscibile est ab ipsa. Sensibile autem cognoscitur et secundum quantitatem dimensionem, propter hoc quod

The divine nature cannot be comprehended by any intellectual creature, for as its being immeasurably exceeds finite being, so does its intelligibility exceed the capacity of any finite power of knowing. God is known *per excessum*: we must predicate all pure perfections infinitely of him and simultaneously place brackets around our limited way of signifying, understanding that he exceeds all of our creature-derived concepts. Hence, Thomas speaks of three ways of knowing God in natural theology, to which correspond three ways of naming him: *per negationem* (or *per remotionem*, *per ablationem*), *per causalitatem*, and *per excessum*—the last having been especially developed by Dionysius, the great authority on the naming of God.¹⁶

There are things that exceed both the field accessible to the senses and the field to which the imagination extends, namely, whatever things are altogether independent of matter both for their being and for their being understood. Accordingly, the knowledge of such things, in regard to the act of judgment, ought to have its term neither in the imagination nor in the senses. Nevertheless, from things apprehended by sense or by imagination, we can arrive at a knowledge of those [immaterial] things, whether by way of causality, as from effects may be considered the cause that is not commensurate with the effects but excels them; or by excess; or by remotion, when we separate from such

sensus in cognoscendo utitur organo corporali, ratione cuius cognoscit sensibilia omnia quae reducuntur ad quantitatem dimensionem; et secundum quantitatem virtutem, ut patet in sensibilibus propriis, quae qualitates sunt; et ideo etiam comprehensio sensus impeditur et propter excessum quantitatis dimensionis, sicut impeditur ne comprehendat totam terram; et propter excessum quantitatis virtualis, sicut impeditur ne comprehendat claritatem solis: quia non est tanta virtus oculi ad cognoscendum, quanta claritas solis quae est cognoscibilis.

Intelligibile autem non cognoscitur ab intellectu sub ratione quantitatis dimensionis nisi per accidens, in quantum scilicet accipit a sensu; ex quo sequitur quod intelligat cum continuo; et secundum hoc intellectus impeditur a comprehensione intelligibilis propter excessum quantitatis; sicut impeditur a comprehensione lineae vel numeri infiniti. Sed per se loquendo, intelligibile comparatur ad intellectum secundum rationem quantitatis virtualis, eo quod proprium objectum intellectus est quid; et ideo in his quae sunt separata a sensu, non impeditur comprehensio intellectus nisi per excessum quantitatis virtualis; et hoc est quando intelligibile plus est cognoscibile quam intellectus cognoscere possit vel cognoscat.

In ad 2 of this article, Thomas shows how Augustine's definition of "comprehension" mentions both kinds of quantity. Thomas discusses God's infinite *excessus* above the created mind in numerous places; a fine text is *DV* 8.2 (22:220–23).

¹⁶ See *Super Boetium de Trinitate* [*Super De Trin.*] 6.3 (50:166–68); and *ST* 1.13.8 ad 2 (4:158). See Charles Journet, *The Dark Knowledge of God* [*Connaissance et inconnaissance de Dieu*], trans. James F. Anderson (London, 1948); Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas and the Divine Names," *Science et Esprit* 32 (1980): 19–33; Mark Johnson, "Apophatic Theology's Cataphatic Dependencies," *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 519–31; and Gregory P. Rocca, *Speaking the Incomprehensible God* (Washington, D.C., 2004). While one of the ways is always referred to as that of causality, the other two are called by a variety of terms: one is *ablatio*, *remotio*, or *negatio*; the other, *excessus*, *eminentia*, or *excellencia*. See Michael B. Ewbank, "Diverse Orderings of Dionysius's *Triplex Via* by St. Thomas Aquinas," *Mediaeval Studies* 52 (1990): 82–109.

things everything that sense or imagination apprehends. And these are the modes of knowing the divine from sensibles that Dionysius lays down in *On the Divine Names*.¹⁷

Dionysius calls God "supersubstantial," says Thomas, on account of the divine *excessus* over all created substances: "he is supersubstantially separated from all, that is, according to the super-substantial excess of Deity."¹⁸ This supersubstantiality "is not unknown [to us] on account of a defect of his, but rather on account of his excess, because he is above created reason and intellect and above created substance itself, which is the object proportioned to the created intellect, just as uncreated essence is proportionate to uncreated knowledge."¹⁹ God is "unintelligible" and "unspeakable" for the same reason. In whatever ways creatures bear likeness to God, their names can be said of him, remarks Aquinas; still, not as they are said of creatures, "but by way of a certain excess." To signal this permanent discrepancy, Dionysius deliberately runs our thinking off the rails it would tend to follow. God is intellect, but "unintelligible intellect"; he is Word, but "unspeakable Word."²⁰ The hymn-

¹⁷ *Super De Trin.* 6.2 (50:165.117–32): "Quedam uero sunt que excedunt et id quod cadit sub sensu et id quod cadit sub ymaginatione, sicut illa que omnino a materia non dependent, neque secundum esse, neque secundum considerationem; et ideo talium cognitio secundum iudicium neque debet terminari ad ymaginationem neque ad sensum. Set tamen ex his que sensu uel ymaginatione apprehenduntur in horum cognitionem deuenimus, uel per uiam causalitatis, sicut ex effectu causa perpenditur que non est effectui commensurata set excellens, uel per excessum, uel per remotionem, quando omnia que sensus uel ymaginatio apprehendit a rebus huiusmodi separamus. Quos modos cognoscendi diuina ex sensibilibus ponit Dionysius in libro De diuinis nominibus."

¹⁸ *DDN* 1.1 n.32 (Marietti, 10): "est ab omnibus segregata supersubstantialiter, idest secundum supersubstantialem Deitatis excessum."

¹⁹ *DDN* 1.1 n.14 (Marietti, 7): "conuenit ipsi, scilicet Deo soli, attribuere supersubstantialitatem scientiam ignorantiae supersubstantialitatis, idest supersubstantialitatis diuinae ignoratae; quae quidem supersubstantialitas non ignorata est propter aliquem suum defectum, sed propter suum excessum, quia scilicet est super rationem et intellectum creatum et super ipsam substantiam creatam quae est obiectum commensuratum intellectui creato, sicut essentia increata est proportionata scientiae increatae. Et ideo sicut essentia diuina est supersubstantialis, ita et eius scientiam supersubstantialem dixit. Semper enim oportet obiectum cognitivae virtutis, virtuti cognoscenti proportionatum esse." Thomas applies this doctrine of proportion not only to our knowledge of God, but to any knowledge of the essentially superior by the essentially inferior, as when he comments on Prop. 9 of the *Liber de causis*, n.214 (Marietti, 60): "Intelligentiae uero sunt maioris unitatis et simplicitatis quam res inferiores; cuius signum est quia quaecumque sunt infra intelligentiam habentia cognoscitivam virtutem, non possunt attingere ad cognoscendum intelligentiae substantiam propter excessum simplicitatis ipsius, per quam etiam rationem sensus corporeus deficit a cognitione rei intelligibilis."

²⁰ *DDN* 1.1 n.29 (Marietti, 9): "Sic igitur, secundum quod qualitercumque similitudo est rerum creaturarum ad Deum, nomina a nobis imposita de Deo dici possunt, non quidem sic sicut de creaturis, sed per quemdam excessum, et hoc significat quod dicit, quod Deus est supersubstantialis substantia; et similiter quod subdit quod est intellectus non-intelligibilis, idest non

ing of Christ's perfections takes a parallel course: "he is above mind and above all life, because he exceeds all knowledge and every act of life."²¹ Such "super-" names are given

remotively through a certain excellence, like super-good, super-substantial, super-alive, super-wise, and whatever others are said of God by way of remotion, on account of his excess. With these names should be classified all causal names, that is, those that designate God as source of the procession of perfections emanating from him into creatures, namely, good, beautiful, existing, endowed with generative life, wise, and whatever others, through which the cause of all goods is named from the gifts of his goodness.²²

The lush profusion of causal names might be summed up in the phrase *superexcedens totum creatum*.²³ The Dionysian affirmation of real likenesses between creature and Creator enclosed within (and to some extent subverted by) ever greater unlikenesses meets with Aquinas's unqualified acceptance. For example, "father" and "son" said of God must be conceptually separated, *per modum excessus*, from the fleeting fatherly and filial instantiations found in creatures.²⁴ This is as much as to say that not only is God truly Father and truly Son, but in God fatherhood and sonship exist with an infinite depth and density in comparison to which their creaturely participations are barely audible echoes, albeit echoes of varying length and beauty. The same account is given of Scripture's applying reduplicated names to God:

God, who is the cause of all, supereminent to all, has the fullness of goodness above all others. Therefore in order to signify this excess by which he exceeds everything, he is called in Scripture "Holy of holies" and the rest of them, i.e., King of kings, Lord of lords, and God of gods; for in this manner of speaking is signified a sort of emanation from a superior cause, so that it would be understood, when "Holy of holies" is said, that the holiness in every other emanates from him, and so on for the other [names]. An excess is also signi-

quales sunt intellectus qui intelliguntur a nobis; et est verbum non-dicibile, idest non qualia sunt verba quae a nobis dicuntur."

²¹ *DDN* 2.5 n.205 (Marietti, 64): "est super mentem et super omnem vitam, quia excedit omnem cognitionem et omnem actum vitae."

²² *DDN* 2.1 n.126 (Marietti, 40-41): "ea quae dicuntur de Deo, remote per excellentiam quamdam, ut superbonum, supersubstantiale, supervivum, supersapiens et quaecumque alia dicuntur de Deo per remotionem, propter sui excessum; cum quibus, dico, connumeranda sunt omnia nomina causalia, idest quae designant Deum ut principium processionis perfectionum quae emanant ab ipso in creaturas, scilicet: bonum, pulchrum, existens, vitae generativum, sapiens et quaecumque alia per quae causa omnium bonorum nominatur ex dono suae bonitatis."

²³ *DDN* 2.5 n.203 (Marietti, 64); see *ST* 1.12.12.

²⁴ *DDN* 2.4 n.184 (Marietti, 57): "Et Pater et Filius sunt segregati per modum excessus ab omni paternitate et filiatione quae est in creaturis, secundum participationem rerum divinarum."

fied, according to which God is separated from everything, as though superior to every existing thing, so that the meaning of "Holy of holies" would be "the Holy One exceeding every holy one"; for it is in this way that the ones who are holy and divine and lordly and kingly exceed the ones who are not such. And furthermore, just as participations exceed participants, as holiness [exceeds] the one who is holy, in this way he is stationed above all existing things—he who is above all existing things, by the fact that he is a certain imparticipable cause of all participants and [all their] participations: for the cause exceeds the caused.²⁵

Because perfections in God infinitely exceed their likenesses found in creatures, one must say he is beyond those perfections as we know and name them. It is this that an elegant phrase of Pruffer's evokes: "the inexhaustible excess of unimitated imitability."²⁶ The separation of God from created being is *secundum totalem excessum*—an absolute, comprehensive excess, allowing no room for some aspect of being according to which God and the creature come together, in all strictness, as one—and philosophical knowledge for its part must therefore be content with falling short of what is most worthy to be known.²⁷ In no way does Thomas worship a God constrained by being: "God

²⁵ *DDN* 12.1 n.955 (Marietti, 357): "Deus, qui est omnium causa, supereminenter omnibus, habet plenitudinem bonitatis super omnia alia. Ideo ad designandum hunc excessum quo excedit omnia, dicitur in Scripturis sanctus sanctorum et reliqua, idest Rex regum, Dominus dominantium et Deus deorum: designatur enim, in isto modo locutionis, emanatio quaedam a causa superiori, ut intelligatur, cum dicitur Sanctus sanctorum, quod ab ipso emanat sanctitas in omnes alios et sic de aliis. Designatur etiam quidam excessus, secundum quem Deus ab omnibus segregatur, quasi superior omnibus existens, ut sit sensus: sanctus sanctorum, idest sanctus excedens omnes sanctos: sic enim ea quae sunt sancta et divina et dominantia et regalia, excedunt ea quae non sunt talia; et rursus, sicut participationes excedunt participantia, ut sanctitas sanctum, ita collocatur super omnia existentia, ille qui est superior omnibus existentibus, eo quod est causa quaedam imparticipabilis omnium participantium et participationum: causa enim excedit causata."

²⁶ Thomas Pruffer, *Recapitulations* (Washington, D.C., 1993), 31.

²⁷ Thomas's doctrine of analogy enters at this point as a way to defend true speech about God on the basis of our knowledge of his effects, which do not share in his form either specifically or generically. *Esse*, fundamental actuality and perfection, is said diversely of God, whose essence is identical to his *esse*, and of the creature, whose *esse* is received as gift—in which can be discerned the compositeness of the creature as such (*ST* 1.4.3). The path of analogy is neither univocal nor purely equivocal, since all created perfections, howsoever far they fall short of God's perfection, are imitations or likenesses of the divine perfection from which they proceed (*ST* 1.13.5; cf. *ST* 1.4.2-3, 6.1, 12.12, 13.1-2, 13.10, etc.). John Saward aptly writes, "It is not that God cannot be known at all but that he is beyond all that can be known of him—which is what is meant by saying that he is incomprehensible. St. Thomas is criticizing an absolutized apophaticism which by denying all knowledge denies all contact, communion, between creature and Creator. Against this, he wants to affirm his understanding of *esse*, which is precisely a unifying vision, a vision of connectedness and communion" ("Towards an Apophatic Anthro-

is said to be non-existent, not because he falls short of existing, but because he is above all existences.²⁸ A higher path opens up which carries one beyond intellect, beyond being as we grasp it.²⁹ At this juncture, one becomes acutely aware of the connection between *On the Divine Names* and *The Mystical Theology*.³⁰

But since God is beyond all processions of this sort, it is necessary that we throw ourselves into God, in order to know him according to remotion from every intellectual operation, i.e., from everything by which he comes into our intellect—and this, precisely because we cannot intellectually see any deification or life or substance which can be perfectly compared to that cause which is separated from every thing according to a total excess. For nothing comes under the vision of our intellect except some created and finite being, which in every way falls short of uncreated and infinite being; and therefore it is necessary that we understand God to be beyond every “that” which we can apprehend by intellect.³¹

As God utterly transcends finite being and thus all conceptions of the created mind, the metaphysician, making all the necessary negations, can attain at best a dim and exiguous knowledge of divine things. For whenever the intellect “makes any determination in that which it understands of God, it falls short of the way in which God is in himself.”³² Paradoxically, it is owing to

pology,” *The Irish Theological Quarterly* 41 [1974]: 224). See O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 55–56 and passim.

²⁸ *DDN* 4.13 n.463 (Marietti, 161): “Deus enim dicitur non-existens, non quia deficit ab existendo, sed quia est super omnia existentia”; cf. *DDN* 4.16 n.506 (Marietti, 177): “Deus est absque substantia, quasi super omnem substantiam existens.” See O’Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*, 205.

²⁹ Even the angels, whose intellects vastly surpass ours, cannot attain *ex naturalibus* to the knowledge of God as he is in himself; they too need to be elevated. See *ST* 1.12.4 corp. and ad 1, 56.3, and 94.2.

³⁰ See Henri-Charles Puech, “La ténèbre mystique chez le Pseudo-Denys l’Aréopagite et dans la tradition patristique,” *Études carmélitaines* 23.2 (1938): 33–53; Michel Corbin, “Négation et transcendance dans l’oeuvre de Denys,” *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 69 (1985): 41–76; and Charles André Bernard, “La doctrine mystique de Denys l’Aréopagite,” *Gregorianum* 68 (1987): 523–66.

³¹ *DDN* 2.4 n.180 (Marietti, 57): “Sed cum Deus sit super omnes huiusmodi processiones, oportet quod nos immittamus nos in Deum, ad cognoscendum ipsum secundum remotionem ab omnibus operationibus intellectualibus, idest ab omni eo quod cadit in intellectum nostrum et hoc ideo quia nos non possumus per intellectum videre aliquam deificationem aut vitam vel substantiam, quae perfecte comparari possit illi causae quae est segregata ab omnibus rebus secundum totalem excessum. Non enim cadit in visionem intellectus nostri, nisi aliquod ens creatum et finitum quod omnino deficit ab ente increato et infinito et ideo oportet quod Deum intelligamus esse supra omne id quod intellectu apprehendere possumus.”

³² *ST* 1.13.11 (4:162): “quemcumque modum determinet circa id quod de Deo intelligit, deficit a modo quo Deus in se est.” See Anton C. Pegis, “Penitus Manet Ignotum,” *Mediaeval*

the very luminosity of its mind that the intellectual creature can be at once aware of God and aware that God eludes its every effort: “the divine light, although infused in them, exceeds all minds, because by its own substance it is always a super-excess.”³³ The only way to come to a living and positive knowledge of the God who “dwells in thick darkness”³⁴ is to throw oneself into his very excessiveness and to live his own life (“nos immittamus nos in Deum”).³⁵ As the first page of Dionysius’s *The Mystical Theology* instructs the disciple,

Timothy, my friend, my advice to you as you look for a sight of the mysterious things, is to leave behind you everything perceived and understood, everything perceptible and understandable, all that is not and all that is, and, with your understanding laid aside, to strive upward as much as you can toward union with him who is beyond all being and knowledge. By going out of yourself in pure and absolute ecstasy, shedding all and freed from all, you will be uplifted to the ray of divine darkness which is above everything that is.³⁶

Rising to union is not the fruit of human effort, but the gift of divine generosity. As Aquinas writes, “his essence is unknown to the creature and exceeds not only the senses, but also every human reason and even every angelic mind, in regard to the natural power of reason and of mind. Hence it is not possible to approach him except by the gift of grace.”³⁷ This is not to de-

Studies 27 (1965): 212–26; Joseph Owens, “Aquinas—‘Darkness of Ignorance’ in the Most Refined Notion of God,” in *Bonaventure and Aquinas: Enduring Philosophers*, ed. Robert W. Shahan and Francis J. Kovach (Norman, Oklahoma, 1976), 69–86; and Saward, “Towards an Apophatic Anthropology,” 222–34.

³³ *DDN* 4.4 n.331 (Marietti, 109): “ponit id quod pertinet ad excessum et dicit quod lumen divinum excedit omnes mentes, licet in eas diffundatur, quia semper superexcessus est per suam substantiam.” Cf. *Super De Trin.* 1.2 ad 3 and *I Sent.* 8.1.1 ad 4.

³⁴ Scripture connects darkness and hiddenness, light and manifestation, with God. “Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was” (Exodus 20:21); “The Lord . . . has said that he would dwell in thick darkness” (1 Kings 8:12); “Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel” (Isaiah 45:15); “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5); “the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see” (1 Timothy 6:15–16).

³⁵ If, as Damascene says, God’s being is as an infinite, indeterminate ocean of substance (*ST* 1.13.11), the created mind must plunge into this divine ocean in order to know God as he is in himself, in his incommunicable singularity (*ST* 1.13.9, 13.11 ad 1). This uniquely singular and all-pervading fullness of being is not something “out there” but indwells *within* the mind (*ST* 1.8.1, 8.2 ad 3, 8.3 ad 4, but especially 43.3, on the indwelling of the Trinity in the just soul).

³⁶ Chap. 1, 1000A, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibhéid (New York, 1987), 135, translation modified. See Michael Waldman, “Thomas von Aquin und die *Mystische Theologie* des Pseudo-Dionysius,” *Geist und Leben* 22 (1949): 121–45.

³⁷ *DDN* 7.4 n.729 (Marietti, 274): “Eius enim essentia est ignota creaturae et excedit non solum sensum, sed etiam omnem rationem humanam et etiam omnem mentem angelicam,

value philosophical knowledge, as though it were worthless; it is rather to highlight its poverty in comparison with the experiential knowledge of sharing a common life. Although the philosopher, clearing away the debris of false imaginations and opinions, slowly gains a darksome knowledge of the "nature" of the one who infinitely transcends his concepts, the attainment of divine wisdom must be the gift of uncreated Wisdom, unattainable and undeserved by the creature as such.

Here can be glimpsed a point of great importance in Thomistic anthropology. C. E. Rolt expresses it in the language of unification: "There is a higher merging of the self and a lower merging of it. The one is above the level of personality, the other beneath it; the one is religious, the other hedonistic; the one results from spiritual concentration and the other from spiritual dissipation."³⁸ When a man is borne out of himself by an *extasis* or *excessus a seipso* initiated, sustained, and carried to its goal by God, he is made partaker of something proper to God, something in excess of created nature. In this way, even as the theological virtues are superhuman because by them man is lifted up into communion with God's truth and goodness, so mystical experience and the life of charity are beyond (natural) living, beyond (natural) wisdom, beyond (natural) goodness, since they participate in the infinite *excessus* of life, wisdom, goodness which is the divine nature.³⁹ When, by contrast, a man is pulled out of himself by an *extasis* or *stupor* such as fleshly desire or anger can provoke, he is made partaker, as it were, of some lower nature, that of a brute animal.⁴⁰ He leads a life outside of himself, outside of what is proper to

quantum ad naturalem virtutem rationis et mentis; unde non potest aliter convenire alicui, nisi ex dono gratiae."

³⁸ *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*, trans. C. E. Rolt (London, 1972), Introduction, 33–34.

³⁹ *ST* 1-2.61.5 and 1-2.62. On ecstasy as a result of participating in grace, see above all *DDN* 7.5 n.739 on the *extasis* of truth, and *DDN* 4.10 on the *extasis* of love. On *extasis* as an effect of love and especially of charity, see also *III Sent.* 27.1.1 obj. 4 and ad 4; *ST* 1-2.28.3; *De perfectione spiritualis uitae*, cap. 10; and *Quodlibet* 3.6.3 corp. For an overview of Thomas's doctrine of ecstasy, see my "St. Thomas, *Extasis*, and Union with the Beloved," *The Thomist* 61 (1997): 587–603.

⁴⁰ For examples of debasing ecstasies mentioned by Aquinas, see *DDN* 7.5 n.739, in which the unbeliever falsely taunts the believer as "sicut extasim passum, idest sicut fatuum et a se alienatum" (Marietti, 278); *Super II Cor.* 5.3 n.179, where drunkenness is contrasted with a divine transport; *In Metaphys.* 4.12 n.678, where Hector's unconsciousness is called an *extasis*; *ST* 1-2.28.3 obj. 1, which assumes that lovers are often out of their minds; the body of the same article, where a downward fall of the mind, such as occurs in furious or demented people, is identified as one type of cognitive *extasis*; and *ST* 2-2.175.2 obj. 2, which cites Gregory contrasting the prodigal son whose wandering and impurity of mind made him fall beneath himself with the Apostle Peter's being "beside himself" when he saw the angel delivering him from prison.

him as a man—a life of *defectus*. Bestial *extasis* is corruptive, taking man away from the perfection of his *human* nature; divine *extasis* is perfective, making man a sharer in the life of God, endowing his nature with a superabundant perfection that carries him beyond the limits of his natural capacity.⁴¹ In both instances the limits of the proper nature have been left behind, but in contrary ways: in one, by falling below, in the other, by rising upwards.

To live according to reason is man's good insofar as he is human. To live beyond reason, on the other hand, in one sense can connote a defect, as in the case of those who live sensually; and this is evil for man. In another sense it can connote an excess, as when a person is led by divine grace to what is above reason. In the latter sense, to live beyond reason is not an evil for man but a good that is above man. And of this sort is the knowledge of the things which are of faith, although faith itself is not altogether beyond reason, for natural reason maintains that we should assent to what is said by God.⁴²

In general, an *excessus* is perfective or fruitful when it leads man beyond himself into God, and corruptive when it leads man to trespass the boundaries of what is good for him, physically or spiritually. "That which proceeds from a tree against the tree's nature," remarks Aquinas, "is not called its fruit, but rather a certain corruption."⁴³

EXCESSUS IN NATURAL "VIRTUES"

Excessus plays a central role in Thomas's analyses of natural and human *virtutes*, most often in a negative sense, but sometimes also from the more

⁴¹ On this contrast, and on the ecstaticism of Aquinas's understanding of reason, see my "Divine Drunkenness: The Secret Life of Thomistic Reason," forthcoming in *The Modern Schoolman*.

⁴² *Super De Trin.* 3.1 ad 5 (50:109.259–71): "uiuere secundum rationem est bonum hominis in quantum est homo, uiuere autem preter rationem potest uno modo sonare in defectum, sicut est in illis qui uiuunt secundum sensum, et hoc est hominis malum; alio modo potest sonare in excessum, ut cum diuina gratia homo adducitur in id quod est supra rationem, et sic preter rationem uiuere non est hominis malum, sed bonum supra hominem. Et talis est cognitio eorum que sunt fidei; quamuis et ipsa fides non omnibus modis sit preter rationem: hoc enim naturalis ratio habet, quod assentiendum est his que a Deo dicuntur."

⁴³ *ST* 1-2.70.4 ad 1 (6:464): "id quod procedit ab arbore contra naturam arboris, non dicitur esse fructus eius, sed magis corruptio quaedam." Thomas has in mind a malignant growth or boil that comes forth on a branch as the external sign of an internal disease. This thing would indeed *grow from* the tree, but it would be *against its nature*, which is to produce fruit. Hence such a growth is more a corruption, a diminishment of the tree's health, than a *fructus*. Taking the English word "produce," which as verb means to bring forth and as noun means the fruits brought forth, one could make Thomas's point by a play on words: "What a sick tree produces is not produce."

positive perspective of *virtus* as an *ultimum* or *extremitas*, an *excellencia* not unrelated to the notion of *excessus*. The philosophical source connecting *virtus* with *ultimum* is a text from *De caelo* 1.11 (281a2–27), “when we speak of a power to move or to lift weights, we refer always to the maximum . . . we feel obliged in defining the power to give the limit or maximum,” which gives Thomas occasion to offer the following extended paraphrase in his commentary:

If a thing is capable of something great—for example, if a man can walk a hundred stades or can lift a great weight—we always determine or describe his power in terms of the most he can do, as we say that the power of this man is that he can lift a weight of a hundred talents or can walk a distance of a hundred stades, even though he is capable of all the partial distances included in that quantity, since he can do what goes above them. But his power is not described by these parts: we do not determine his power as being able to carry fifty talents or walk fifty stades, but by the most he can do, so that in this way the power of each thing is named with respect to the end, i.e., with respect to the ultimate, and to the maximum of which it is capable, and with respect to the strength of its excellence. . . . Thus, it is plain that one who can do things that excel, necessarily can also do things that are lesser . . . yet it is to what is excelling that a thing’s virtue is attributed, i.e., a thing’s virtue is gauged in terms of what is most excellent of everything that can be done. This is what is said in another translation, “virtue is the limit of a power,” in other words because the virtue of a thing is determined according to the ultimate it can do. And this applies also to the virtues of the soul: for a human virtue is that through which a man is capable of what is most excellent in human works, i.e., in a work which is in accord with reason.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *In libros Aristotelis De caelo et mundo expositio [In De caelo] 1.25, §4 (3:101a):* “Si contingat aliquam rem posse in aliquid magnum, puta quod aliquis homo ambulet per centum stadia, aut possit levare aliquod magnum pondus, semper determinamus sive denominamus eius potentiam per respectum ad plurimum in quod potest; sicut dicimus potentiam huius hominis esse quod potest levare pondus centum talentorum, aut quod potest ire per spatium centum stadiorum, quamvis possit omnes partes infra istam quantitatem contentas, siquidem potest in id quod superabundat. Nec tamen denominatur ab illis partibus, puta quod determinetur eius potentia quia potest ferre quinquaginta talenta, aut ire quinquaginta stadia; sed per id quod est maximum: ita scilicet ut potentia uniuscuiusque denominetur per respectum ad finem, idest per ultimum et per maximum ad quod potest, et per virtutem suae excellentiae. . . . Sic igitur patet quod ille qui potest in ea quae excellunt, necesse est quod possit etiam in ea quae sunt infra . . . sed tamen virtus rei non attribuitur nisi excellentiae, idest, secundum id attenditur virtus rei, quod est excellentissimum omnium eorum in quae potest. Et hoc est quod dicitur in alia translatione, virtus est ultimum potentiae, quia scilicet virtus rei determinatur secundum ultimum in quod potest. Et hoc etiam habet locum in virtutibus animae: dicitur enim virtus humana, per quam homo potest in id quod est excellentissimum in operibus humanis, scilicet in opere quod est secundum rationem.”

In line with the physical-cosmological context of the *De caelo* passage, Thomas submits natural *virtutes* to a similar analysis. From these discussions, much can be gathered that sheds light on the notion of *excessus mentis* and *extasis*, not least because Thomas, sharing with other medieval theologians a predilection for symbols, was quick to perceive likenesses at every level between the natural, the human, the angelic, and the divine. Thomas’s analysis of the element of fire is a particularly good example. Fire is a certain *excessus calidi*, and its peculiar properties belong to it *propter excessum caliditatis*: “the fourth element placed in order above the air is not properly called fire, for ‘fire’ signifies excess of heat and is, as it were, a certain burning and stirring up; just as ice is not an element but is a certain excess of cold within frozen water.”⁴⁵ Thomas gives as a reason for Heraclitus’s favoring of fire this element’s *excessus virtutis*, by which it can transform other things into itself:

But neither fire nor any other of the elements can be infinite, because it would be impossible for any of the elements to exist, beyond the one that was infinite, because that one would everywhere fill up the whole. Again, were there some finite [element], it would have to be changed into the infinite one on account of the excess of its [that element’s] power, just as Heraclitus manifestly claimed that at some time all things must be converted into the element of fire, on account of the very great excess of its power.⁴⁶

Explaining in his commentary on Dionysius the difference between beauty in creatures and beauty in God, Thomas appeals to the difference between fire and the sun, which is reputed the *principium* of all fires. His answer is phrased in terms of a distinction between *excessus in genere* and *excessus extra genus*, which yields the rationale for the Neoplatonic language of “super-[perfection]” that has already been touched on:

Now excess is twofold: one within a genus, which is signified comparatively or superlatively; another outside of a genus, which is signified by the addition of this preposition, “super”; for example, when we say that fire exceeds in

⁴⁵ *In libros Aristotelis Meteorologicorum expositio 1.4, §6 (3:336b):* “quartum elementum supra aerem ordinatum non proprie vocatur ignis. Ignis enim significat excessum calidi, et est quasi quidam fervor et accensio quaedam; sicut glacies non est elementum, sed est quidam excessus frigoris ad aquam congelatam.” Cf. 1.13, §1 (3:361a). The phrase *propter excessum caliditatis* is from *Sententia libri de sensu et sensato* 10, §6 (45.2:53.76)

⁴⁶ *In Metaphys.* 11.10 n.2336 (Marietti, 552): “Sed neque ignis, neque aliquod aliud elementorum potest esse infinitum: quia impossibile esset aliquod elementorum esse, praeter id quod esset infinitum, quia illud replet totum undique. Et etiam si esset aliquod finitum, oporteret quod converteretur in illud infinitum, propter excessum ipsius virtutis; sicut Heraclitus manifeste posuit quod aliquando omnia sint convertenda in elementum ignis, propter nimium excessum virtutis eius.” The same line of argument is used at *In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis expositio [In Phys.] 3.8, §9 (2:126b)*, where again Heraclitus is mentioned.

hotness by an excess within the genus, whence it is called "hottest"; whereas the sun exceeds by an excess outside of the genus, whence it is not called "hottest" but "super-hot," because hotness is not in it in the same way but in a more excellent way. And although this twofold excess does not come together at the same time in created things, yet in God it can be said at the same time that he is "most beautiful" and "super-beautiful"; not that he is in a genus, but that to him may be attributed everything that is in each and every genus.⁴⁷

Understanding fire and its properties in this way, Thomas in his commentary on Isaiah can readily appeal to fire as a symbol of God and to its transformative power as an illustration of the effects of divine love in the soul and in the world.⁴⁸ Just as fire transforms other matter into itself or at least communicates a share of its form to other things according to their capacity for receiving it (as the teapot and the water in it receive a share of the flame's hotness), so God's love poured into the heart transforms the lover into a likeness of the one he loves; and as it belongs to fire to set other things on fire, to resist the cold and dry the damp, so it belongs to the lover of God to show the intensity of love Thomas calls *zelus*, which seeks mightily to repel anything contrary to the beloved's good: "zeal for thy house hath consumed me" (Psalm

⁴⁷ *DDN* 4.5 n.343 (Marietti, 114): "Excessus autem est duplex: unus in genere, qui significatur per comparativum vel superlativum; alius extra genus, qui significatur per additionem huius praepositionis: super; puta, si dicamus quod ignis excedit in calore excessu in genere, unde dicitur calidissimus; sol autem excedit excessu extra genus, unde non dicitur calidissimus sed supercalidus, quia calor non est in eo, eodem modo, sed excellentiori. Et licet iste duplex excessus in rebus causatis non simul conveniat, tamen in Deo simul dicitur et quod est pulcherrimus et superpulcher; non quod sit in genere, sed quod ei attribuuntur omnia quae sunt cuiuscumque generis." See also *Super De Trin.* 1.2 ad 4 (50:85.170-73): "Deus autem quamvis non sit in genere intelligibilem quasi sub genere comprehensum, utpote generis naturam participans, pertinet tamen ad hoc genus ut principium."

⁴⁸ The most ample discussion of fire as divine symbol is found at *Super Isaiam* 10 (28:76.330-77.363), where Thomas gives twelve reasons why God may be called fire, grouped around four characteristics of fire—its subtlety, brilliance, heat, and levity. Thus God is subtle in substance, knowledge, and manifestation; he is bright in his effects on intellect, affection, and action; he is like heat by warming to life, cleansing, and destroying; he lifts all to himself, dwells in heaven, and is unmixed with baser things. Briefer accounts are found at *Super Isaiam* 33 (28:148.136-42), where three reasons are given (fire purges, sets other things on fire, and condemns), and at *Super Heb.* 12.5 (Marietti, 2:495), where fire is said to have, among sensible things, more nobility, more brightness, more activity, more altitude, and more purifying and consuming power. At *Super Isaiam* 30 (28:140.324-36), Thomas offers five reasons for applying the symbol of fire to charity: it illuminates, boils up or heats ["exstuat"], turns things towards itself, makes one ready to act, and draws upwards. *Super Ier.* 5 (Busa, 5:101a, §8) gives five reasons why the word of the Lord is said to be a fire: it illuminates, sets aflame, penetrates, melts, and consumes the disobedient. It is noteworthy that such descriptions of fire regularly accompany Thomas's depiction of the effects of love. For example, in both *III Sent.* 27.1.1 ad 4 and *ST* 1-2.28.5, he speaks of how intense love causes *fervor* or burning, how it melts or "liquefies" the heart, and how it makes the lover penetrate into the inmost recesses of the beloved.

69:9; John 2:17). Thomas agrees with Dionysius's exalted estimation of the fittingness of fire as a symbol: "The first order of the first angelic hierarchy approaches to divine properties in the manner, in a way, of a *maximum excessum*; hence they are named 'seraphim' from the property of fire, which maximally signifies divine properties, as Dionysius says."⁴⁹ In an objection arguing that love is a passion that wounds the lover, we read "'Fervor' designates a certain excess in hotness—a destructive excess. But fervor is caused by love, for Dionysius places 'hot' and 'cutting' and 'super-fervent' among the various properties pertaining to the love of the seraphim."⁵⁰ This line of thinking is developed in the *Summa theologiae*:

The name "seraphim" is not imposed from charity alone but from an excess of charity, which the word "ardor" or "fire" implies. Hence Dionysius (*Celest. Hier.* 7) expounds the name "seraphim" according to the properties of fire, in which there is an excess of heat. Now in fire three things may be considered. First, the movement, which is upwards and is continuous. Through this is signified that they are moved unfailingly towards God. Second, the active force, which is heat, which is not a property found in fire in the same way as it is in other things but rather as having a peculiar sharpness because it is most penetrating in acting, and reaches even to the smallest things; and [it does this], moreover, with super-exceeding fervor. And through this is signified the action of such angels, which they exercise powerfully upon their subjects, rousing them to a like fervor and cleansing them wholly by their fire. Third, in fire one may consider its brightness. And this signifies that such angels have in themselves an inextinguishable light, and that they perfectly enlighten others.⁵¹

Let the foregoing suffice as an illustration of Thomas's understanding of natural *virtutes* and the various excesses they exhibit or symbolize.

⁴⁹ *II Sent.* 9.6 ad 4 (245): "Primus enim ordo primae hierarchiae quodammodo secundum maximum excessum accedit ad divinas proprietates: unde nominantur seraphim ex proprietate ignis, qui maxime significat divinas proprietates, ut dicit Dionysius." See, e.g., the passage from *Celestial Hierarchies* 15 discussed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 2, *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*, trans. Andrew Louth, Francis McDonagh, and Brian McNeil (San Francisco, 1984), 181-82.

⁵⁰ *ST* 1-2.28.5 obj. 3 (6:201): "fervor designat quendam excessum in caliditate, qui quidem excessus corruptivus est. Sed fervor causatur ex amore: Dionysius enim, vii cap. Cael. Hier., inter ceteras proprietates ad amorem Seraphim pertinentes, ponit calidum et acutum et super-fervens."

⁵¹ *ST* 1.108.5 ad 5 (5:500): "nomen Seraphim non imponitur tantum a caritate, sed a caritatis excessu, quem importat nomen ardoris vel incendii. Unde Dionysius, vii cap. Cael. Hier., exponit nomen Seraphim secundum proprietates ignis, in quo est excessus caliditatis. In igne autem tria possumus considerare. Primo quidem, motum, qui est sursum, et qui est continuus. Per quod significatur quod indeclinabiliter moventur in Deum. Secundo vero, virtutem activam

EXCESSUS IN HUMAN VIRTUES

A natural or entitative *virtus* (e.g., the power of fire to heat and burn) is an *excessus* or something "of surpassing power" in some genus (e.g., of hot things). An operative habit, e.g., a moral or intellectual *virtus*, is an *excessus* in a different sense: it is that fullness of perfection by which the innate undeveloped potency of some power of the soul is rendered capable of—and in some cases actually inclined to—its maximal exercise. The doctrine of the *De caelo* passage, linked with other characteristically Aristotelian tenets (virtue is the ordering of something perfect to what is best for it;⁵² virtue makes a man as well as his work good;⁵³ human happiness is the active attainment, in accord with virtue, of the best of all things for man⁵⁴), provides the foundations for Thomas's understanding of the necessity of having and exercising virtues in order to be happy. When virtue is understood according to its essence, "it bespeaks the ultimate of a power, because it designates the completion of a power."⁵⁵ It is so called "not because it is always something belonging to the essence of a power, but because it inclines to the ultimate that a power is capable of."⁵⁶ When Thomas wishes to show that magnificence is a virtue, he appeals to this doctrine:

eius, quae est calidum. Quod quidem non simpliciter invenitur in igne, sed cum quadam acuitate, quia maxime est penetrativus in agendo, et pertingit usque ad minima; et iterum cum quodam superexcedenti fervore. Et per hoc significatur actio huiusmodi angelorum, quam in subditos potenter exercent, eos in similem fervorem excitantes, et totaliter eos per incendium purgantes. Tertio consideratur in igne claritas eius. Et hoc significat quod huiusmodi angeli in seipsis habent inextinguibilem lucem, et quod alios perfecte illuminant." Thomas continues by saying that the cherubim are named *a quodam excessu scientiae*.

⁵² Thomas frequently quotes the dictum "virtus dicitur dispositio perfecti ad optimum"; in the *Sentences* commentary alone, for example, at *I Sent.* 1.1 obj. 11 (33); *II Sent.* 26.4 ad 2 (678), 27.2 ad 9 (700); *III Sent.* 23.1.3.1 (707, §58), 24.3.2 (775, §92); and *IV Sent.* 46.1.1.2 ad 1 (Busa, 1:660b). Though this point is found most explicitly in Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* 2.5 (1222a6–10), Thomas deduces the dictum from *Physics* 7.3 (246a10–247a20). Cf. *In Phys.* 7.5, §6 (2:339b–340a): "Virtus enim universaliter cuiuslibet rei est quae bonum facit habentem, et opus eius bonum reddit. . . . Similiter pulchritudo et macies dicuntur ad aliquid (et sumitur macies pro dispositione, qua aliquis est expeditus ad motum et actionem). Huiusmodi enim sunt quaedam dispositiones eius quod est perfectum in sua natura per comparisonem ad optimum, id est ad finem, qui est operatio."

⁵³ Aristotle, *Ethics* 2.6 (1106a14–23).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 1.6 and 1.9.

⁵⁵ *De virtutibus in commune* 1.1 ad 6 (Marietti, 709b–710a): "potest intelligi essentialiter; et sic virtus dicitur ultimum potentiae, quia designat potentiae complementum; sive id per quod potentia completur, sit aliud a potentia, sive non." Cf. *II Sent.* 10.3 (262): "virtus dicitur ultimum in re de potentia"; and *III Sent.* 23.1.3.3 ad 2 (708, §68): "virtus dicitur ultimum potentiae in eodem genere, quod est genus principii respectu ejus cujus dicitur potentia vel virtus."

⁵⁶ *De virtutibus in commune* 1.9 ad 15 (Marietti, 733a): "virtus dicitur esse ultimum poten-

"Virtue" is said with reference to the ultimate that a power is capable of—not the ultimate on the side of defect, but rather on the side of excess, whose *ratio* consists in magnitude. And therefore to do something great, from which the name "magnificence" is taken, properly pertains to the *ratio* of virtue. Hence, magnificence names a virtue.⁵⁷

And when he sets about explaining why a distinct order of angels is denominated *virtutes*, the same idea is in the background:

"Virtue" can be taken in two ways. First, commonly, considered as the medium between essence and operation, and in that sense all the heavenly spirits are called "heavenly virtues," as also "heavenly essences." Secondly, as meaning a certain *excessus* of strength; and thus it is the proper name of an angelic order. Hence Dionysius says (*Celest. Hier.* 8) that "the name 'virtues' signifies a certain virile and immovable strength"; first, in regard of those divine operations which befit them; secondly, in regard to receiving divine gifts. Thus it signifies that they undertake without any fear the divine [tasks] pertaining to them, which seems to pertain to strength of mind.⁵⁸

On the other hand, *excessus* in a negative sense is the contrary of *defectus* in matters admitting of a *medium*, and in this way *excessus* or *superabundantia* is contrasted both with any *defectus* or *diminutio* and with the *medium* of conformity to reason that the virtues place into passions and operations.⁵⁹ Here, excess or defect is said in reference to conformity with the rules that govern human action, namely, reason and the divine law.⁶⁰ In terms of confor-

tae, non quia semper sit aliquid de essentia potentiae; sed quia inclinatur ad id quod ultimo potentia potest." Cf. *ST* 1-2.66.1 obj. 2 (6:428): "omne illud cuius ratio consistit in maximo, non potest esse maius vel minus. Sed ratio virtutis consistit in maximo, est enim virtus ultimum potentiae."

⁵⁷ *ST* 2-2.134.1 (10:89): "virtus dicitur per comparisonem ad ultimum in quod potentia potest: non quidem ad ultimum ex parte defectus; sed ex parte excessus, cuius ratio consistit in magnitudine. Et ideo operari aliquid magnum, ex quo sumitur nomen magnificentiae, proprie pertinet ad rationem virtutis. Unde magnificentia nominat virtutem."

⁵⁸ *ST* 1.108.5 ad 1 (5:499): "Virtus autem dupliciter accipi potest. Uno modo, communiter, secundum quod est media inter essentiam et operationem: et sic omnes caelestes spiritus nominantur caelestes virtutes, sicut et caelestes essentiae. Alio modo, secundum quod importat quendam excessum fortitudinis: et sic est proprium nomen ordinis. Unde Dionysius dicit, VIII cap. Cael. Hier., quod nomen Virtutum significat quandam virilem et inconcussam fortitudinem, primo quidem ad omnes operationes divinas eis convenientes; secundo, ad suscipiendum divina. Et ita significat quod sine aliquo timore aggrediuntur divina quae ad eos pertinent, quod videtur ad fortitudinem animi pertinere."

⁵⁹ *ST* 1-2.64 summarizes the nature and role of the *medium* in each kind of virtue. The background is *Ethics* 2.6, esp. 1106b7–17 and 1106b24–35.

⁶⁰ *ST* 1-2.19.3–4 and 63.2; *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* [DM] 1.3. Cf. *ST* 1-2.68.1 ad 2 (6:447): "vitia, in quantum sunt contra bonum rationis, contrariantur virtutibus: in quantum autem sunt contra divinum instinctum, contrariantur donis. Idem enim contrariatur Deo et rationi,

mity to the dual measure of reason and divine law, any *excessus* or *defectus* always implies sin, while passions and operations that observe the mean are good and integral to human perfection.⁶¹ A general principle obtains: "the good of anything consists in a *medium*, according to which it is conformed to a rule or measure which it is possible to go beyond or fall short of."⁶² One sees this principle at work most clearly in discussions of the moral virtues whose task is to regulate the passions, i.e., to make them obedient servants of reason, readily susceptible to the imposing of its *mensura*. It is in such contexts that we find Thomas's rejection of the Stoic doctrine of the passions as evils and of the wise man's complete freedom from them, which Thomas characterizes as "inhuman."⁶³ Nevertheless, Thomas usually adds that if the Stoics be understood to mean by "passions" those that are disordered, the quarrel would be about words, for the Peripatetic account too maintains that the motions of the sensitive appetite are morally good only when moderated by reason, i.e., when they follow the mean appointed by reason according to relevant circumstances.⁶⁴

The distinction between ordered (ruled, measured, moderate) and disordered (unruly, unmeasured, immoderate) passions is applied throughout the *Secunda pars*. The terse analysis of the goodness or badness of the irascible passion *audacia* is typical:

Now a passion is sometimes moderated according to reason, and sometimes it lacks the mode of reason, either by excess or by deficiency, and on this ac-

cuius lumen a Deo derivatur"; and 68.8 ad 2 (6:455): "per hoc quod homo bene se habet circa rationem propriam, disponitur ad hoc quod se bene habeat in ordine ad Deum."

⁶¹ On the Thomistic doctrine of *mensura* and its antecedents, see James McEvoy, "The Divine as the Measure of Being in Platonic and Scholastic Thought," *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 17 (Washington, D.C., 1987), 85-116.

⁶² *ST* 1-2.64.3 (6:415): "bonum alicuius rei consistit in medio, secundum quod conformatur regulae vel mensurae quam contingit transcendere et ab ea deficere." Aristotle introduces the idea at *Ethics* 2.2 by making a comparison: it belongs to the nature of virtues "to be destroyed by defect and excess, as we see in the case of strength and of health (for to gain light on things imperceptible we must use the evidence of sensible things); both excessive and defective exercise destroys the strength, and similarly drink or food which is above or below a certain amount destroys the health, while that which is proportionate both produces and increases and preserves it" (1104a11-17).

⁶³ This is in the context of the discussion of Christ weeping over the death of Lazarus (*Super Ioan.* 11.5 n.1535 [Marietti, 286]), which is interpreted as a demonstration on the part of Christ of the truth of his humanity: "Stoici enim dixerunt quod nullus sapiens tristatur. Sed valde inhumanum esse videtur quod aliquis de morte alicuius non tristetur." Cf. *ST* 1-2.59.3 ad 3 (6:382): "tristitia immoderata est animae aegritudo: tristitia autem moderata ad bonam habitudinem animae pertinet, secundum statum praesentis vitae."

⁶⁴ *ST* 1-2.59.2 and 5; *ST* 2-2.123.10.

count the passion is vicious. Now, the names of the passions are sometimes taken from [their] superabundance, as "anger" is said of not just any [anger] but a superabundance, in which case it is vicious. And in the same way, too, daring, when meaning a superabundance [thereof], is accounted a sin.⁶⁵

Thomas establishes that covetousness is a sin in the same way, appealing explicitly to the principle of commensuration:⁶⁶

Wherever there are things whose good consists in due measure, evil necessarily ensues through excess or diminishment of that measure. Now in all things that are for the sake of an end, the good consists in a certain measure, since the things that are towards an end must be commensurate with it, as, for instance, medicine is commensurate with health, as is clear from the Philosopher (*Politics* 1.6). Now external goods have the *ratio* of "useful for an end," as said above. Hence it is necessary that man's good with respect to them consists in a certain measure—namely, that a man seeks, according to a certain measure, to have external riches, insofar as they are necessary for him to live in keeping with his condition. And therefore sin consists in an excess over this measure, namely, that he wishes to acquire or retain these things beyond a due manner; which pertains to the *ratio* of covetousness, which is defined as immoderate love of possessing.⁶⁷

While the moral virtues offer the readiest examples, all the virtues and vices without exception are analyzed in terms of excess, defect, and mean, although exactly what this trio labels will vary notably from one class of operative habits to another. As we have seen, the excess, defect, and mean of

⁶⁵ *ST* 2-2.127.1 (10:49): "Passio autem quandoque quidem est moderata secundum rationem: quandoque autem caret modo rationis, vel per excessum vel per defectum; et secundum hoc est passio vitiosa. Sumuntur autem quandoque nomina passionum a superabundanti: sicut ira dicitur non quaecumque, sed superabundans, prout scilicet est vitiosa. Et hoc etiam modo audacia, per superabundantiam dicta, ponitur esse peccatum."

⁶⁶ I use this phrase to refer to a line of argument found in many places, e.g., *In librum Boetii de hebdomadibus expositio* 2 n.37 (Marietti, 399): "Alia vero quae sunt exterius, appetuntur vel refutantur in quantum conferunt ad propriam perfectionem: a qua quidem deficit quandoque aliquid per defectum, quandoque autem per excessum. Nam propria perfectio uniuscuiusque rei in quadam commensuratione consistit"; cf. *SCG* 3.139 (14:419, Sed).

⁶⁷ *ST* 2-2.118.1 (9:455): "in quibuscumque bonum consistit in debita mensura, necesse est quod per excessum vel diminutionem illius mensurae malum proveniat. In omnibus autem quae sunt propter finem, bonum consistit in quadam mensura: nam ea quae sunt ad finem necesse est commensurari fini, sicut medicina sanitati; ut patet per Philosophum, in I Polit. Bona autem exteriora habent rationem utilium ad finem, sicut dictum est. Unde necesse est quod bonum hominis circa ea consistat in quadam mensura: dum scilicet homo secundum aliquam mensuram quaerit habere exteriores divitias prout sunt necessaria ad vitam eius secundum suam conditionem. Et ideo in excessu huius mensurae consistit peccatum: dum scilicet aliquis supra debitum modum vult eas vel acquirere vel retinere. Quod pertinet ad rationem avaritiae, quae definitur esse immoderatus amor habendi."

moral virtues concerned with passions have reference to the interior condition of the agent, the ordering of his soul's powers under the governance of reason (thus, here one speaks of the *medium rationale*); with justice, they are brought into the ambit of the *medium rei*, the establishment of equality or due proportion in exchanges of things owed;⁶⁸ with the intellectual virtues, they refer to exceeding or falling short of the being of things, which measures speculative and practical truth in the created intellect; with the theological virtues, there cannot even be a fixed *medium*, much less an *excessus*, on the part of the object believed, hoped in, loved, since it is absolute truth and infinite good; but there can be *defectus* or *excessus per accidens* with reference to man's state of life or condition of soul.⁶⁹ For our topic, the theological virtues offer the most interesting perspective. As just mentioned, because these virtues have no mean and no *excessus*, a Christian can never believe, hope, or love as much as he ought, and yet even doing what little he can suffices to keep him in contact with the infinite object as attained by these virtues. Yet this object is never given to man in such a way that it would become his own; it always remains the being, the truth, of God, in which the creature is granted a share by divine pleasure. It is quite in keeping with the basic meaning of *ekstasis*, a "standing outside oneself," to see faith, hope, and charity as ecstatic virtues both in their essence, for they make man share in the divine nature, and in their exercise, for they drive man towards God in a motion that never comes to a static term where "everything is done that can be done." Hence Thomas remarks: "the good of such virtues does not consist in a mean but increases the more we approach to the summit."⁷⁰

There is, then, considerable flexibility in how *excessus*, *defectus*, and *medium* are understood for each virtue, or put differently, what should be identified as the *extremitas* in either direction. A concise comparison of the negative and positive senses of *extremitas* in the context of moral virtues is found in the response to an objection occasioned by the *De caelo* definition of *virtus*. The objector argues: "It would seem that moral virtue does not observe

⁶⁸ "Things" here also include acts of the soul. For example, acts of worshiping God are justly owed to him on account of his excellence, acts of thanksgiving are owed to whomever gives something good to us, etc. Because Thomas takes the scenario of commutative justice (exchange between equal persons of equalizable goods) as paradigmatic for all virtues that are "parts" of justice, he organizes the subordinate virtues according as they more or less perfectly exhibit this commutative *ratio* (*ST* 2-2.80). God's infinite *excessus* is the basis for Thomas's argument that the *ratio* of justice is found least perfectly in the most important justice-virtue, religion, by which we make an inevitably finite return to a God who deserves infinite worship and thanks (*ST* 2-2.81).

⁶⁹ *ST* 1-2.64.4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* (6:416): "Et sic bonum talis virtutis non consistit in medio, sed tanto est melius, quanto magis acceditur ad summum."

the mean. For the nature of a mean is incompatible with that which is extreme. Now the nature of virtue is to be something extreme; for it is stated in *De caelo* 1 that virtue is the ultimate of a power."⁷¹ Thomas responds:

Moral virtue has goodness from the rule of reason, while for matter it has passions or operations. If therefore we compare moral virtue to reason, so, according to that which is of reason, it has the *ratio* of one extreme, which is conformity; while excess and defect have the *ratio* of the other extreme, which is deformity. But if moral virtue be considered according to its matter, so it has the *ratio* of a mean, insofar as it leads the passion back to the rule of reason. Hence the Philosopher says (*Ethics* 2) that "virtue, according to essence, is a mean state," insofar as the rule of virtue is imposed on its proper matter, "but it is an extreme according to the best and the excellent," viz., according to conformity with reason.⁷²

Earlier we saw that *excessus* could be regarded as perfective when it leads man beyond himself into God. It is in this sense that anything undertaken in excess of the common mode of virtue, such as consecrated virginity, evangelical poverty, and the renunciation of one's own will by a vow of obedience, is held worthy of praise, insofar as it enables one to strive more intensely for spiritual goods and the heavenly kingdom: "he who gives all that is his in order to fulfill the counsel of Christ is not prodigal but does a perfect act of virtue. . . . And one should make a similar response about virginity and other things of this sort, in which is seen an excess above the common mode of virtue."⁷³ More generally, Aquinas holds that "some moral virtues are perfected by tending to an extreme."⁷⁴ So, too, the infused moral virtues are

⁷¹ *ST* 1-2.64.1 obj. 1 (6:412): "Videtur quod virtus moralis non consistat in medio. Ultimum enim repugnat rationi medii. Sed de ratione virtutis est ultimum: dicitur enim in I de Caelo, quod virtus est ultimum potentiae."

⁷² *Ibid.* ad 1 (6:412): "virtus moralis bonitatem habet ex regula rationis: pro materia autem habet passiones vel operationes. Si ergo comparetur virtus moralis ad rationem, sic, secundum id quod rationis est, habet rationem extremi unius, quod est conformitas: excessus vero et defectus habet rationem alterius extremi, quod est difformitas. Si vero consideretur virtus moralis secundum suam materiam, sic habet rationem medii, in quantum passionem reducit ad regulam rationis. Unde Philosophus dicit, in II Ethic., quod virtus secundum substantiam medietas est, in quantum regula virtutis ponitur circa propriam materiam: secundum optimum autem et bene, est extremitas, scilicet secundum conformitatem rationis."

⁷³ *Liber contra impugnantes Dei cultum et religionem* [*Contra impugnantes*] 6 ad 10 (41:A102.744-50): "qui omnia sua dat propter Christi consilium implendum, non est prodigus, sed perfectum actum virtutis facit. . . . et similiter est dicendum de virginitate, et de aliis huiusmodi, in quibus videtur excessus supra communem modum virtutis."

⁷⁴ *ST* 1-2.64.1 obj. 3 (6:412): "quaedam virtutes morales perficiuntur per hoc quod tendunt ad extremum." In the reply, as well as in the reply to the second objection, Thomas grants this point to be true but explains how any moral virtue that is extreme in terms of its "quantity" (i.e., how much it does or expends, as one sees with magnificence on the one hand and poverty

distinguished from naturally acquired moral virtues by the different *acts* to which they lead, springing from different *motives*: while natural temperance aims at moderating pleasures of touch according to the good of man in this life, supernatural temperance *mortifies* the flesh by abstinence, in order that a man may grieve over sin, free his soul for contemplation, and please God by the holocaust of his life.⁷⁵ In the striking article (1-2.61.5) in which Thomas, introducing the Neoplatonic authorities Macrobius and Plotinus, initiates a transition from the realm of political virtues to theological virtues—adding, in a sense, a Platonic corrective to the prior Aristotelian perspective—we find a discussion of the virtues that carry man beyond the confines of the natural order and lead him into the realm of God. The point of departure is Augustine's statement that the soul needs to follow God in order to give birth to virtue. Thus the exemplar of human virtue must pre-exist in God, as do the *rationes* of all things; and so we may speak of "exemplar virtues" in God (e.g., God's "fortitude" as his unchangeableness). Moreover, since human beings are *naturally* social, the cardinal virtues having their exemplar in God can exist in us according to a *natural* mode, as political virtues whereby we act well in merely human affairs. Thomas furnishes the reader with a hermeneutical key to his treatise on virtue by noting that up to the present moment he has been speaking of the cardinal virtues in *this* sense—at the natural, political level. Yet there is something more:

But because it pertains to man that he should also do as much as he can to draw himself to divine things, as even the Philosopher declares (*Ethics* 10.7), and as Scripture often admonishes us, as in Matthew 5:48, "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," we must place certain virtues between the political, which are human virtues, and the exemplar, which are divine virtues. Now these virtues are distinguished according to diversity of movement and term. Thus, certain ones are virtues of those who are on their way and tending towards the divine likeness, and these are called purifying virtues. In this manner, prudence counts as nothing all things of the world in its contemplation of divine things and directs all the thoughts of the soul to God alone, while temperance, so far as nature allows, relinquishes what is required for the use of the body; it belongs to fortitude, moreover, to keep the soul unafraid of going out [*excessus*] of the body and rising up [*accessus*] to heavenly things, while justice is the whole soul giving consent to the way thus proposed. Again, certain ones are virtues of those who have already attained to the divine like-

on the other) must still hold the mean as regards conformity with the rule of reason. The distinction between the formal aspect of the virtue (conformity with reason, which should be done to the extreme) and its particular matter (which must always be moderated, at least as regards due circumstances) is all important in working out this solution.

⁷⁵ On the difference between acquired and infused virtues, see *ST* 1-2.63.3-4.

ness, and these are called virtues of a purified soul. In this manner, prudence gazes upon God alone; temperance knows nothing of earthly desires; fortitude has no knowledge of passion; and justice, by imitating the divine mind, is joined to it by an everlasting covenant. And such are the virtues that we say to be in the blessed or in others who are most perfect in this life.⁷⁶

Infused and fostered by God, such superhuman virtues and the ecstatic life they create carry the human person to the height of perfection ("tota anima consentiat"), the inmost participation of divine eternity and blessedness ("sola divina intueatur, cum divina mente perpetuo foedere societur").

Nevertheless, something like what I have called the "Platonic corrective" is found in Aristotle when he distinguishes between ordinary virtues and vices and the rare extremes of bestial vice and divine or heroic virtue: "If, as they say, men become gods by excess of virtue, of this kind must evidently be the state opposed to the brutish state; for as a brute has no vice or virtue, so neither has a god; his state is higher than virtue, and that of a brute is a different kind of state from vice."⁷⁷ Regarding the notion of heroic or divine virtue, Thomas comments:

The human soul is a mean (or: middle) between the higher and divine substances with which it shares intelligence and brute animals with which it shares sensitive powers. Just as therefore the affections of the sensitive part are sometimes corrupted in man even to the point of likeness to dumb animals, and this is called brutishness, beyond human vice and incontinence; so also the rational part in man is sometimes perfected and strengthened beyond the usual mode of human perfection, as though in likeness to separated substances, and this is called divine virtue, beyond ordinary human virtue and continence. For

⁷⁶ *ST* 1-2.61.5 (6:398): "Sed quia ad hominem pertinet ut etiam ad divina se trahat quantum potest, ut etiam Philosophus dicit, in X Ethic.; et hoc nobis in sacra Scriptura multipliciter commendatur, ut est illud Matth. v, 'Estote perfecti, sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est': necesse est ponere quasdam virtutes medias inter politicas, quae sunt virtutes humanae, et exemplares, quae sunt virtutes divinae. Quae quidem virtutes distinguuntur secundum diversitatem motus et termini. Ita scilicet quod quaedam sunt virtutes transeuntium et in divinam similitudinem tendentium: et haec vocantur virtutes purgatoriae. Ita scilicet quod prudentia omnia mundana divinorum contemplatione despiciat, omnemque animae cogitationem in divina sola dirigat; temperantia vero relinquat, in quantum natura patitur, quae corporis usus requirit; fortitudinis autem est ut anima non terreatur propter excessum a corpore, et accessum ad superna; iustitia vero est ut tota anima consentiat ad huius propositi viam. Quaedam vero sunt virtutes iam assequentium divinam similitudinem: quae vocantur virtutes iam purgati animi. Ita scilicet quod prudentia sola divina intueatur; temperantia terrenas cupiditates nesciat; fortitudo passiones ignoret; iustitia cum divina mente perpetuo foedere societur, eam scilicet imitando. Quas quidem virtutes dicimus esse beatorum, vel aliquorum in hac vita perfectissimorum." See also *ST* 1-2.65.2, where it is stated that only infused virtues deserve to be called virtues absolutely speaking, while all acquired virtues deserve the name only relatively.

⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Ethics* 7.1 (1145a24-27).

the order of things is so arranged that the mean between different parts touches both extremes. Whence, too, in human nature there is something that comes into contact with what is higher, something that is conjoined to what is below, and something that stands in a middle way.⁷⁸

Thomas correlates what Aristotle refers to as divine or heroic virtue both to special helps given by God to men in their natural condition and, more aptly, to the gifts of the Holy Spirit:

Gifts have something greatly beyond what belongs to the common notion of virtue, insofar as they are certain divine virtues perfecting man insofar as he is moved by God. Hence the Philosopher in *Ethics* 7 places above common virtue a certain heroic or divine virtue, according to which some are called divine men.⁷⁹

All the virtues of man perfect his self-motion: theological virtues cause within him knowledge of, motion towards, and union with God; intellectual virtues perfect his reason in its acts; moral virtues perfect the appetitive powers in their obedience to the dictates of reason.⁸⁰ The gifts of the Holy Spirit, however, continually dispose the soul to receive and be led by the motion or prompting of God himself, so that God is the artist, the teacher, the sun, and man the tool (*organum*) to be used, the pupil to be guided, the moon to be illuminated.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Sententia libri VIII Ethicorum* [*Sent. VIII Ethic.*] 1 (47:381.91–107): “anima humana media est inter superiores substantias et divinas, quibus communicat per intellectum, et animalia bruta quibus communicat in sensitivis potentiis; sicut ergo affectiones sensitivae partis aliquando in homine corrumpuntur usque ad similitudinem bestiarum et hoc vocatur bestialitas supra humanam malitiam et incontinentiam, ita etiam rationalis pars quandoque in homine perficitur et confortatur ultra communem modum humanae perfectionis, quasi in similitudinem substantiarum separatarum, et hoc vocatur virtus divina supra humanam virtutem et continentiam; ita enim se habet rerum ordo, ut medium ex diversis partibus attingat utrumque extremum, unde et in humana natura est aliquid quod attingit ad id quod est superius, aliquid vero quod coniungitur inferiori, aliquid vero quod medio modo se habet.”

⁷⁹ *ST* 1-2.68.1 ad 1 (6:447): “Habent [dona] tamen aliquid supereminens rationi communi virtutis, in quantum sunt quaedam divinae virtutes, perficientes hominem in quantum est a Deo motus. Unde et Philosophus, in VII Ethic., supra virtutem communem ponit quandam virtutem heroicam vel divinam, secundum quam dicuntur aliqui divini viri.” Cf. *ST* 1-2.68.2.

⁸⁰ *ST* 1-2.68.8.

⁸¹ *ST* 1-2.68.1 corp. and ad 3, 68.2, and 68.4 ad 1. On the notion of holy men and women as *organa* of God or of the Holy Spirit, see the text just cited (*ST* 1-2.68.4 ad 1); *ST* 3.25.6; and *Super Isaiam*, prologue. The human nature of Christ is also referred to several times as *organum Deitatis* or by a similar phrase (e.g., *III Sent.* 12.2.1; *IV Sent.* 48.1.1 ad 5; *SCG* 4.41 [15:141, Sed cum]; *ST* 1-2.112.1 ad 1; *Compendium theologiae* 1.211). Thomas comments on the gifts of the Holy Spirit in a number of other places, e.g., *Super Isaiam* 11 (28:79.87–80.210) and *Super Gal.* 5.6 (Marietti, 1:635–38); for an overview, see M.-Michel Labourdette, “Dons du Saint-Esprit—Saint Thomas et la théologie thomiste,” *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 3:1610–35.

When, however, radical or “excessive” ways of living are undertaken for the wrong reasons, in the wrong circumstances, etc., they become excessive in the morally bad sense. As Aquinas explains, “virginity abstains from all sexual matters, and poverty from all wealth, for a right end, and in a right manner, i.e., according to God’s command, and for the sake of eternal life. But if this is done in an undue manner, i.e., out of unlawful superstition, or again for vainglory, it will be superfluous [=in excess].”⁸² In such texts we encounter again a negative *excessus*, something bad, unhealthy, unnatural. Any result disproportionate to what a nature intends, or any failure to attain what is intended for something by its maker, is said to go beyond, or exceed, the process leading to it. Corruption or defect is *praeter naturam* and thus an example of *quidam excessus*:

For nothing that is “beside nature” is everlasting, since what is beside nature is subsequent to what is according to nature. This is plain from the fact that in the generation of anything, whatever is beside nature is a certain excess, i.e., a corruption and defect of that which is according to nature (for example, monstrosities are certain corruptions and defects of a natural thing). But corruptions and defect are naturally posterior, just as lacking is subsequent to having.⁸³

More particularly, sickness and sin are disharmonious and ugly because they are *secundum excessum a propria natura* of the body and of the soul:

Theologians praise the Godhead as wise and beautiful, because all existing things in which a proper nature is found to be preserved without corruption are filled with all divine harmony, i.e., perfect consonance or order to God, and are, moreover, filled with a holy comeliness; when he says “harmony,” it refers to the wisdom to which it belongs to order and give measure to things; but when he says “comeliness,” it refers most of all to beauty. Now, by the very fact that something of harmony or comeliness is diminished, corruption befalls things according to an *excessus* from [their] proper nature—like sickness in bodies, and sin in the soul.⁸⁴

⁸² *ST* 1-2.64.1 ad 3 (6:413): “Abstinet enim virginitas ab omnibus venereis, et paupertas ab omnibus divitiis, propter quod oportet, et secundum quod oportet; idest secundum mandatum Dei, et propter vitam aeternam. Si autem hoc fiat secundum quod non oportet, idest secundum aliquam superstitionem illicitam, vel etiam propter inanem gloriam; erit superfluum.” Cf. *Contra impugnantes* 6 ad 10 (41.A102.746–48): “si autem non debito fine aut aliis circumstantiis indebitis omnia daret prodigus esset.”

⁸³ *In De caelo* 2.4, §6 (3:137a): “Nihil enim quod est praeter naturam, est sempiternum: quia illud quod est praeter naturam, est posterius eo quod est secundum naturam: quod quidem patet ex hoc quod in generatione cuiuslibet rei, id quod est praeter naturam est excessus quidam, idest corruptio et defectus, eius quod est secundum naturam (sicut videmus quod monstra sunt quaedam corruptiones et defectus rei naturalis); corruptio autem et defectus est naturaliter posterior, sicut privatio quam habitus.”

⁸⁴ *DDN* 1.2 n.59 (Marietti, 19): “laudant Deitatem theologi sicut sapientem et pulchram,

PSYCHOLOGICAL *EXCESSUS*: MADNESS OR LOSING ONE'S MIND

The link between sin or sickness and excessiveness, between bodily or mental disease and the trespassing of nature (*propria natura*), brings us to a final and quite distinct sphere of meaning. Within this final category—mental, psychic, or spiritual *excessus*—the positive and negative uses of the term stand furthest apart, separated by an abyss that stretches their connection almost to the breaking point. The *excessus* of mental disease is the worst and most destructive for man, fearful as death; the *excessus* of divine inspiration and charity is the best and most perfective, surpassing all creaturely hopes.

Insanity or madness is the most obvious instance of a psychological *excessus*, and with his customary realism Thomas finds frequent occasion to mention it, usually in conjunction with sleep, drunkenness, fury, lust, stupidity, or other things that deprive a person, to one degree or another, of the use of reason. While *insanus* means sick, unhealthy, unsound, *insania* typically refers to mental sickness in particular. There are other words, too, that indicate madness or the loss of one's mind, among them *amentia*, *dementia*, *furor*, and *mania*.⁸⁵ Thomas had at least two very good pastoral reasons for discussing this whole matter: whether insane persons should be permitted to receive the sacraments, and to what extent insanity, in any of its forms, diminishes culpability for sin.⁸⁶

quia omnia existentia, in quibus invenitur propria natura salvata absque corruptione, sunt plena omni harmonia divina, idest perfecta consonantia seu ordine a Deo et sunt, iterum, plena sancto decore; ut quod dicit: harmonia, referatur ad sapientiam cuius est ordinare et commensurare res; quod autem dicit: decore, maxime ad pulchritudinem referatur. Per hoc, autem, quod diminuitur aliquid de harmonia vel decore, accidit corruptio in rebus, secundum excessum a propria natura, sicut aegritudo in corporibus et peccatum in anima."

⁸⁵ *Amentia* literally means "mindlessness" or "loss of mind"—having lost the *use* of one's mind, "having lost one's wits." I shall cite texts where Thomas says that anger and lust can lead to *amentia*; they make a person "mindless" or "not mindful" of what he is doing (though such English phrases are a good bit weaker in force than the Latin). The prefixes of *amentia* and *dementia* may indicate a subtle difference: *a-mentia* would be a total loss of the use of reason, whereas *de-mentia* would be a partial falling away (the word "demented" has preserved this connotation of *partial* madness). However, I have not yet been able to ascertain any consistent pattern in Aquinas's usage that would suggest a distinction consciously made between the terms, and in any event, it makes little difference for the present discussion. For the sake of consistency, I keep to the same translations: for *insanus*, "insane" or "unsound"; for *amens*, "mad" or, where the discussion is more pastoral, "insane" (in one instance I had to say "mindless" to bring out the point); for *furiosus*, "frantic" or "raving." The term *furor* is more narrow, signifying more or less what "fury" does in contemporary English.

⁸⁶ In passing, it may be noted that Thomas, whom hagiographers like to portray as a placid, retiring contemplative, seems to have had a flair for labeling certain ideas crazy and their proponents as none too intelligent. In *SCG* 1.3 (13:8, Adhuc'), for example, he writes, "a man would show himself to be the most insane fool if he declared the assertions of a philosopher to

An indication of Thomas's understanding of *insania* may be found in a discussion of how the virtue of mercy, as a part of temperance, moderates the use of punishment by keeping it within reasonable bounds. Here Thomas points out the mental unsoundness of those who take delight in punishment:

Unsoundness [*insania*] bespeaks the corruption of health. Now just as bodily health is corrupted by the fact that the body falls away from the rightful constitution of the human species, so too *insania* in the soul is so called from the fact that the human soul falls away from the rightful disposition of the human species. This happens both in terms of reason itself, e.g., when someone loses the use of reason, and in terms of the appetitive power, e.g., when someone loses the human affection according to which a man is naturally a friend to every man, as is said in *Ethics* 8. Now the *insania* which shuts off the use of reason is opposed to prudence. But when someone takes delight in punishing a man, this is also called *insania*, because in this way it is indicated that he is devoid of the human affection upon which mercy follows.⁸⁷

Insania is here divided into that which consists in the loss of the use of reason and that which consists in the absence of the affection that ought to be operative.⁸⁸ Cognitive and appetitive *insania* are brought together in a discussion of how reason can be unseated by violent passion. Reason can be overcome

through a certain bodily change by which reason is in a way fettered, nor is free to go forth into its act, even as sleep or drunkenness, owing to some change worked on the body, fetter the use of reason. And that this takes place in the passions is clear from the fact that sometimes when passions are very intense a man completely loses the use of reason; for many have lapsed into insanity on account of an abundance of love or anger.⁸⁹

be false because he was incapable of understanding them" ("maximae amentiae esset idiota qui ea quae a philosopho proponuntur falsa esse assereret propter hoc quod ea capere non potest").

⁸⁷ *ST* 2-2.157.3 ad 3 (10:269): "insania dicitur per corruptionem sanitatis. Sicut autem sanitas corporalis corrumpitur per hoc quod corpus recedit a debita complexione humanae speciei, ita etiam insania secundum animam accipitur per hoc quod anima humana recedit a debita dispositione humanae speciei. Quod quidem contingit et secundum rationem, puta cum aliquis usum rationis amittit: et quantum ad vim appetitivam, puta cum aliquis amittit affectum humanum, secundum quem 'homo naturaliter est omni homini amicus,' ut dicitur in VIII Ethic. Insania autem quae excludit usum rationis, opponitur prudentiae. Sed quod aliquis delectetur in poenis hominum, dicitur esse insania, quia per hoc videtur homo privatus affectu humano, quem sequitur clementia."

⁸⁸ The same division between an *excessus* in the apprehensive part of the soul and an *excessus* in the appetitive part appears in Thomas's treatment of *extasis* (*ST* 1-2.28.3) and *raptus* (*ST* 2-2.175.2).

⁸⁹ *ST* 1-2.77.2 (7:63): "per quamdam immutationem corporalem, ex qua ratio quodammodo ligatur, ne libere in actum exeat: sicut etiam somnus vel ebrietas, quadam corporali transmutatione facta, ligant usum rationis. Et quod hoc contingat in passionibus, patet ex hoc quod ali-

Recalling that Thomas welcomes Aristotle's metaphor of reason as ruler or king within the soul,⁹⁰ and the passions as free subjects with some power of resistance,⁹¹ one appreciates why a massive bodily *immutatio* or *transmutatio* at the level of the passions, amounting to a violent revolution in the soul's government, can result in the weakening or obliteration of reason's rulership.⁹² If Thomas is no dualist, he nevertheless underscores the duality of passible human nature and the resultant possibility of one or the other "nature" holding sway: sometimes a man's whole soul is uniformly, as it were, sensualized or intellectualized, "because either the sensitive part is totally subjected to reason, as occurs in the virtuous, or on the contrary reason is totally absorbed by passion, as happens in those who have gone mad."⁹³

This alarming situation is a more intensified form of something quite ordinary, namely, the "fettering" of reason during sleep. Aquinas sees a likeness between dreaming and madness: "in us deception occurs, properly speaking, according to [the faculty of] *phantasia*, through which we sometimes adhere to the likenesses of things as though they were the things themselves, as is clear in those who are sleeping or mad."⁹⁴ During sleep, reason, no longer *magister actu regens*, cedes first place to the imagination which is then free to roam unfettered. Truth and falsehood become strangely vague, place and time lose their logic, judgment turns unreliable, self-awareness (and the self-possession related to it) disintegrate.⁹⁵ Something similar takes place in drink-

quando, cum passiones multum intenduntur, homo amittit totaliter usum rationis: multi enim propter abundantiam amoris et irac, sunt in insaniam conversi."

⁹⁰ Cf. *ST* 2-2.47.12 (8:360): "Regere autem et gubernare proprie rationis est. Et ideo unusquisque inquantum participat de regimine et gubernatione, intantum convenit sibi habere rationem et prudentiam."

⁹¹ Cf. *ST* 1-2.56.4 ad 3 and 58.2.

⁹² Cf. *ST* 1-2.77.7 (7:68): "passio quandoque quidem est tanta quod totaliter aufert usum rationis, sicut patet in his qui propter amorem vel iram insaniunt."

⁹³ *ST* 1-2.10.3 ad 2 (6:88): "cum in homine duae sint naturae, intellectualis scilicet et sensitiva, quandoque quidem est homo aliquis uniformiter secundum totam animam: quia scilicet vel pars sensitiva totaliter subiicitur rationi, sicut contingit in virtuosis; vel e converso ratio totaliter absorbetur a passione, sicut accidit in amentibus."

⁹⁴ *ST* 1.54.5 (5:53): "deceptio autem in nobis proprie fit secundum phantasiam, per quam interdum similitudinibus rerum inhaeremus sicut rebus ipsis, ut patet in dormientibus et amentibus." This is said in contrast to the metaphorical way in which perverse *phantasia* is attributed to the demons: "phantasia proterva attribuitur daemonibus, ex eo quod habent falsam practicam existimationem de vero bono." Thomas often quotes Dionysius's statement that evil in the demons is threefold: "furor irrationabilis, demens concupiscentia et fantasia proterva" (*DM* 16.1 obj. 3 [23:279.25-7]), sometimes substituting the phrase "concupiscentia amoris" for the second, as at *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* [*DP*] 6.6 obj. 3 (Marietti, 172a). In the *DP* he replies (Marietti, 176a): "Utitur autem metaphoricè nomine furoris et concupiscentiae pro voluntate inordinata, et nomine phantasiae pro intellectu errante in eligendo."

⁹⁵ For a philosophical account of what is occurring in the dream-state, see F.-X. Maquart,

ing beyond sobriety, or in getting worked up into amorous passion or seething anger: in such cases, too, the rulership of reason is thrown down while some inferior power takes charge.⁹⁶ For Aquinas, imagination has disconcerting potential: "the judgment and apprehension of reason, as well as the judgment of the estimative power, can be obstructed owing to a vehement and disordered apprehension of the imagination, as is clear in madmen."⁹⁷ A sleeping or drunken or raging man's habits, like those lingering to little purpose in a madman's soul, are not ready to go into act:

Sometimes a habit is so responsive that it can go into act immediately when a man wishes. But other times the habit is so bound that it cannot go into act. Hence in one sense a man seems to have a habit and in another sense not to have it, as is evident in one sleeping, a maniac, or a drunkard. Men are disposed in this way when under the influence of the passions. For we see that anger, sexual desires, and certain passions of this kind obviously change not only the animal [i.e., psychic] motions but the external body, for example when the body gets heated up by them. And sometimes these passions grow to such an extent that they lead people to madness. And so it is plain that the incontinent are disposed like those asleep, or maniacs, or drunkards, who have the habit of practical science fettered in regard to particulars.⁹⁸

"Le rêve et l'extase mystique: Étude philosophique et théologique," *Études carmélitaines* 17.1 (1932): 41-81, esp. 47 ff. Maquart explores Thomas's account of the suspension during sleep of the normal functioning of the *sensus communis* and the *vis cogitativa*, the unfettering of the imagination, the loss of free will and the collapse of truthful reasoning. In the dream-state, "l'exubérante activité de l'imagination trouve le champ libre et impose, par suite de l'abdication de la volonté, ses propres fantaisies à l'intelligence, si bien qu'au choix volontaire succède un déroulement d'images que seule l'association régit. . . . Par suite de cette inversion, à la logique de la raison, qui procède par attributions intrinsèques, succède la logique des rapports extrinsèques de l'association" (50-51). The dream is "une régression du concept vers l'image, le contraire d'une abstraction" (52), in which "le centre en est descendu du plan de l'intelligence au plan de la sensibilité" (53). He contrasts all of this with what takes place in mystical ecstacy, wherein the higher powers of the soul are elevated and perfected. "Malgré les ressemblances de surface, rêve et extase mystique ne peuvent s'identifier. . . . Si l'on peut parler pour l'un et l'autre de simplification, ce n'est certes pas dans le même sens: le rêve est, sur l'état de veille, une simplification descendante, appauvrissante, dans l'extase au contraire la simplification est ascendante, enrichissante" (41).

⁹⁶ Children, too, are said to be lacking the full use of reason; hence we find texts that compare the mad and frantic to them. With children, of course, there is no question of another power *taking over*, but rather of a power, reason, that has not *yet* taken charge in nature's due course. Cf. *ST* 2-2.88.9 obj. 1 and *ST* 3.68.12 obj. 2.

⁹⁷ *ST* 1-2.77.1 (7:61): "Impeditur enim iudicium et apprehensio rationis propter vehementem et inordinatam apprehensionem imaginationis, et iudicium virtutis aestimativae: ut patet in amentibus."

⁹⁸ *Sent. VII Ethic.* 3 (47:392.177-93): "aliquando enim est habitus solutus, ut statim possit exire in actum cum homo voluerit; aliquando autem est habitus ligatus ita quod non possit exire

Accordingly, bad things done by sleeping, furious, amorous, or drunk men, once they have passed well into their conditions of *amentia*, can no longer be imputed to them as free agents responsible for their deeds.⁹⁹ The active role of reason being suppressed, there is no willing of the deed: to fall beneath reason is to fall beneath responsibility.¹⁰⁰ At the peak of *amentia*, one cannot even speak of continence or incontinence, because the very judgment of reason, in comparison with which the conqueror of passion is called continent and the vanquished incontinent, ceases to be present to the mind.¹⁰¹ A reason chained

in actum, unde quodammodo videtur habere habitum et quodammodo non habere, sicut patet in dormiente vel maniaco aut etiam ebrioso. Et hoc modo sunt dispositi homines dum sunt in passionibus; videmus enim quod irae et concupiscentiae venereorum et quaedam huiusmodi passiones manifeste transmutent et corpus exterius et non solum animales motus, puta cum ex his incalescit corpus; et quandoque tantum increscunt huiusmodi passiones quod quosdam in insanias deducunt. Et sic manifestum est quod incontinentes similiter disponuntur dormientibus, aut maniacis aut ebriosis, quod scilicet habent habitum scientiae practicae in singularibus ligatum." As usual, Thomas allows bodily changes a wide range of influence; a disturbance of passion can be so strong as to obstruct altogether the use of reason (cf. *ST* 1-2.10.3). See also the texts in nn. 99-101.

⁹⁹ *ST* 2-2.154.5 (10:229): "id quod agit homo dormiens, qui non habet liberum iudicium rationis, non imputatur ei ad culpam: sicut nec illud quod agit furiosus aut amens." Similarly, women who are taken advantage of by men owing to being asleep, drunk, or mentally unstable are guiltless, unless beforehand they intended this to occur: *IV Sent.* 33.3.1 ad 6. Cf. *ST* 1-2.88.6 ad 2. As Thomas always points out when treating of culpable vs. non-culpable ignorance, a person is responsible for placing himself in a situation known to be likely to weaken the use or judgment of reason.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. *ST* 1-2.6.7 ad 3 (6:62): "si concupiscentia totaliter cognitionem auferret, sicut contingit in illis qui propter concupiscentiam fiunt amentes, sequeretur quod concupiscentia voluntarium tolleretur." The direct proportion between concupiscentia and involuntariness explains how culpability for a particular act may be diminished: *DM* 3.9 (23:87.208-21): "ex aliqua corporali transmutatione ligatur usus rationis, ut uel totaliter nichil consideret uel quod non libere considerare possit, sicut patet in dormientibus et freneticis. Per passiones autem fit aliqua immutatio circa corpus, ita quod interdum aliqui propter iram uel concupiscentiam uel aliquam huiusmodi passionem in insaniam inciderunt. Et ideo, quando huiusmodi passiones sunt fortes, per ipsam transmutationem corporalem ligant quodammodo rationem ut liberum iudicium de particularibus agendis non habeat. Et sic nichil prohibet aliquem scientem secundum habitum et in uniuersali, per infirmitatem peccare." Relying on the same principle, Thomas maintains in *Quodlibet* 3.12.2 ad 2 (25:286.68-84) that the guilt incurred by a badly-formed conscience is obviated by madness. Cf. *ST* 1-2.76.3 ad 3.

¹⁰¹ *ST* 2-2.156.1 (10:259): "Si vero passiones adeo increscant quod totaliter auferant usum rationis, sicut accidit in his qui propter vehementiam passionum amentiam incurrunt, non remanebit ratio continentiae neque incontinentiae: quia non saluatur in eis iudicium rationis, quod continens seruat et incontinens deserit." Thus, in an objection against baptizing the insane, which argues that since they lack the use of reason their intention can only be disordered (*ST* 3.68.12 obj. 1), the mistake is easy to see: if there is no use of reason, there is, morally speaking, no intention at all. Hence Thomas responds that, provided the person has made no indication to the contrary, the Church's intention suffices and may substitute for their lack of intention.

down by some other force can no longer perform its function as interior standard or light.

While sexual desire is an obvious instance of a passion whose excessive vehemence can lead to mental breakdown or the loss of one's mind, *ira* (anger) and *furor* (raging, wrath, rancor) also hold a prominent place among the causes by which reason is overthrown and some degree of *amentia* suffered. Appealing to Seneca, Thomas writes that "other more vehement passions lead man away from right reason more than desire for pleasures of touch, like fear of deadly dangers, which stupefy man, and anger, which is like insanity."¹⁰² Seeking to prove that anger is the most grievous of sins, an objector argues that "anger is most of all harmful, because it draws man away from reason, through which man is lord of himself; for Chrysostom says that 'anger differs in no way from madness; it is a demon while it lasts, indeed more troublesome than one harassed by a demon.'¹⁰³ Although Thomas does not agree that it is most grievous in itself (hatred of the good and envy at the good are, *ceteris paribus*, worse sins), he grants that anger has a peculiar impetuosity, a strength and quickness of movement, by which it is capable of overmastering a man, getting the better of his reason: "owing to anger especially, some have lapsed into fury and insanity, which pertain to folly."¹⁰⁴ Anger skews judgment: "Gregory says that what is right seems perverse to a mind drunk with fury."¹⁰⁵ Because they could not tolerate insults, Alcibiades put up a good fight, the great-souled Achilles went mad from anger, fearing nothing, and Ajax killed himself.¹⁰⁶ Intense anger can give rise to a fearlessness somewhat like the rare vice of *impaviditas*, which Thomas, following Aristotle, associates with insanity and even with an entire nation: "it does not happen except in insane persons or in some who lack the sense of pain that they should fear

¹⁰² *ST* 2-2.155.2 obj. 2 (10:254): "quaedam aliae passiones vehementius abducunt hominem a ratione recta quam concupiscentiae delectabilium tactus, sicut timor periculorum mortis, qui stupefacit hominem; et ira, quae est insaniae similis, ut Seneca dicit." Thomas does not disagree with the objection on this point, but only with the false conclusion, viz., that continence has more to do with passions of fear and anger than with pleasures of touch.

¹⁰³ *ST* 2-2.158.4 obj. 2 (10:276): "Ira autem maxime nocet: quia aufert homini rationem, per quam est dominus sui ipsius; dicit enim Chrysostomus quod 'irae et insaniae nihil est medium, sed ira temporaneus est quidam daemon, magis autem et daemonium habente difficilius.'"

¹⁰⁴ *ST* 2-2.46.3 obj. 3 (8:346): "Praeterea, ex ira aliqui praecipue vertuntur in furorem et insaniam, quae pertinent ad stultitiam." Thomas does not deny this premise of the objection.

¹⁰⁵ *DM* 16.6 obj. 15 (23:308.127-29): "Gregorius dicit in Pastoralibus, quod menti furore ebrius peruersum uidetur esse quod rectum est."

¹⁰⁶ *Expositio libri Posteriorum* 2.16 (1*2:230.44-50): "Sicut Alcibiades, id est Hercules, dictus est magnanimus, et etiam Achilles et etiam Aiax, qui omnes habent unum quid commune, quod est non sustinere iniurias: cuius signum est quod Alcibiades non sustinens iniurias dimicauit, Achilles uero in insaniam uersus est propter iram, Aiax autem interfecit seipsum."

nothing—say neither earthquakes nor floods nor other such things, as is said to happen in those who are called Celts, which is the name of a people."¹⁰⁷ Similarly, a man who is unmoved by injuries done to himself is either a mighty lover of God or thoroughly witless:

To be unmoved when one is injured is sometimes due to the fact that one has no taste for worldly things, but only for heavenly things. Hence this belongs not to worldly stupidity but to divine wisdom, as Gregory says. Sometimes, though, it is the result of a man's being simply stupid about everything, as may be seen in madmen, who do not discern what is injurious to them, and this belongs to folly simply.¹⁰⁸

At various places Thomas, following Aristotle, Gregory of Nyssa, and Damascene, distinguishes the different kinds of anger, which will permit us to discern their relationship to madness. There is an anger that is quickly aroused (*fel* or *fellea*), an anger that lingers over wrongs (*mania*), and an anger that rages until it has taken revenge (*furor*), each presupposing the former and going beyond it, each one step further from a rational frame of mind:

The three kinds of anger posited by Damascene as well as Gregory of Nyssa are taken from those things that cause anger to increase. This happens in three ways. In one way, from facility of the movement itself; and such anger he calls *fel*, because it is quickly aroused. In another way, on the part of the grief that causes anger, which lingers some time in the memory; and this pertains to *mania*, which is derived from *manere*. Thirdly, on the part of that which the angry man seeks, viz., vengeance; and this pertains to *furor*, which never rests until it punishes. Hence the Philosopher (*Ethics* 4) calls some angry persons *acuti* [choleric, *akrocholoï*], because they are easily angered; some he calls *amari* [bitter, *pikroi*], because they retain their anger for a long time; and some he calls *difficiles* [ill-tempered, *chalepoi*], because they never rest until they have punished.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *Sent. III Ethic.*, lec. 15 (47:165–66.129–35): "non enim contingit nisi in aliquo insano vel in aliquo qui non habet sensum doloris, quod scilicet nihil timeat, puta neque terrae motum neque inundationes neque aliquid talium, sicut dicitur accidere de quibusdam qui vocantur Celtae, quod est nomen gentis."

¹⁰⁸ *ST* 2-2.46.1 ad 4 (8:345): "non moveri iniuriis quandoque quidem contingit ex hoc quod homini non sapiunt terrena, sed sola caelestia. Unde hoc non pertinet ad stultitiam mundi, sed ad sapientiam Dei, ut Gregorius ibidem dicit. Quandoque autem contingit ex hoc quod homo est simpliciter circa omnia stupidus: ut patet in amentibus, qui non discernunt quid sit iniuria. Et hoc pertinet ad stultitiam simpliciter."

¹⁰⁹ *ST* 1-2.46.8 (6:298–99): "tres species irae quas Damascenus ponit, et etiam Gregorius Nyssenus, sumuntur secundum ea quae dant irae aliquod augmentum. Quod quidem contingit tripliciter. Uno modo, ex facilitate ipsius motus: et talem iram vocat *fel*, quia cito accenditur. Alio modo, ex parte tristitiae causantis iram, quae diu in memoria manet: et haec pertinet ad maniam, quae a manendo dicitur. Tertio, ex parte eius quod iratus appetit, scilicet vindictae: et

As we are dealing here with different sets of terminology—one from a Latin version of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, another from translations of the Eastern Fathers, with a dose of confusion from medieval Latin's fluidity—the terms tend to be interchangeable in meaning and application, as Thomas recognizes.¹¹⁰ Whether or not he succeeds in classifying the species of anger given by the *auctoritates*, what is more relevant at present is his observation that wrath or rage (*furor*) means *ira accensa*, anger kindled to a blazing pitch.¹¹¹ Just as "zeal implies an intensity of love," so *furor* implies "an intensity of anger,"¹¹² and as jealousy for the beloved can make a lover go mad, *furor* has power to throw the vengeful into *amentia*. Scripture may use the name of "wrath" to signify metaphorically God's unerring justice,¹¹³ but an ethicist uses it to name the condition of a man beside himself with irascible passion, which is deadly for the order of reason: "that man perishes in wrath of soul who, on account of his wrath, cuts out wisdom and justice, which are the soul's chief goods."¹¹⁴

By allowing reason and its goods of wisdom and justice to be thwarted, the furious man abandons what distinguishes him from and places him over the

haec pertinet ad furem, qui nunquam quiescit donec puniat. Unde Philosophus, in IV Ethic., quosdam irascentium vocat acutos, quia cito irascuntur; quosdam amaros, quia diu retinent iram; quosdam difficiles, quia nunquam quiescunt nisi puniant." Thomas parallels Aristotle and the Fathers in another place, where he is responding to the claim that their divisions do not match up: the sed contra of *ST* 2-2.158.5.

¹¹⁰ *ST* 1-2.46.8 ad 2 (6:299): "Nihil autem prohibet ut thymosis Graece, quod Latine furor dicitur, utrumque importet, et velocitatem ad irascendum et firmitatem propositi ad puniendum." Given its customary use in English, one might think that *mania*, for example, should express the most intense form of anger, but it seems that for Thomas *furor* describes a condition beyond that of *mania*. One should also note that while *furor* and *furiosus* can refer to the anger that "sees nothing but red" and will not rest until vengeance is taken, it can also broadly signify madness, as when Thomas groups together *amentes* and *furiosi*, as he very often does.

¹¹¹ Thus we read in *Super Iob* 19 (26:114.104–106): "unde dicit iratus est contra me furor eius, quod dicit ad designandum vehementiam irae: nam furor est ira accensa." Later in the commentary we get the same account, *ibid.*, 21 (26:127.300–301): "furor est ira accensa, nomine furoris acrior vindicta significatur." Cf. *Super Isaiam* 13 (28:87.77–78): the prophet writes *furor* "quantum ad impetuosam ultionem, quia furor est ira accensa." Cf. *Super Ps.* 36, §6 (Busa, 6:100b): "Ira et furor idem sunt; sed differunt secundum magis et minus: quia furor nihil aliud est quam ira accensa."

¹¹² *DV* 26.4 (22:761.182–83): "zelus importat intensionem amoris, furor intensionem irae." Cf. *III Sent.* 26.1.3 (822, §45): "furor autem intensionem irae."

¹¹³ *Super Iob* 3 (26:26.549–54): "Et quamvis innocens sim tamen venit super me indignatio, idest poena a Deo—ira enim in Deo non accipitur pro commotione animi sed pro punitione—, in quo recognoscit adversitates huius mundi non absque divino nutu provenire"; cf. *ST* 1.3.2 ad 2.

¹¹⁴ *Super Iob* 18 (26:109.37–39): "Ille enim in furore animam perdit qui propter furem a sapientia et iustitia excidit quae sunt praecipue animae bona."

irrational animals,¹¹⁵ becoming like a beast dominated by its instinctive passions:

For nothing prevents something which is good in a particular manner from being called "bad" with respect to a certain nature, insofar as it is opposed to the perfection of the nobler nature; just as to be raging is a certain good with respect to a [watch-]dog, but an evil with respect to man who has reason. Nevertheless it is possible that there should be in man, according to his sensible and corporeal nature which he shares with brutes, a certain inclination to raging, which is evil for man.¹¹⁶

Corresponding inversely to the ways human nature can be elevated by grace to a sharing of the divine life (*deificatio*) are the various ways man can fall *beneath* his humanity into a bestial or brutish life. A barbaric or "rude" manner of life fomented by a lack of reasonable laws is one way of becoming generally brutish, although not necessarily to a very great extent; an uncontrolled eruption of feelings, for example in mourning the dead, is another and more transient way to become less than human; immense growth in vice is yet another, and certainly the worst, for which reason we disgrace the vicious by calling them "beasts" or "monsters" who "bear within their human bodies the heart of a beast."¹¹⁷ As the *De Regno* teaches about tyrants: "A man governing without reason according to the lust of his soul in no way differs from a beast. . . . Men therefore hide from tyrants as from cruel beasts, and it seems that to be subject to a tyrant is the same thing as to lie prostrate beneath a raging

¹¹⁵ *ST* 2-2.47.6 obj. 2 (8:353): "Praeterea, homo excedit res irrationales secundum rationem, sed secundum alia cum eis communicat. Sic igitur se habent aliae partes hominis ad rationem sicut se habet homo ad creaturas irrationales. Sed homo est finis creaturarum irrationalium ut dicitur in I Politic. Ergo omnes aliae partes hominis ordinantur ad rationem sicut ad finem." Thomas does not dispute this part of the objection.

¹¹⁶ *De substantiis separatis* 20 (40:D77.79-88): "nihil enim prohibet aliquid quod est particulariter bonum alicui naturae, in tantum dici malum in quantum repugnat perfectioni nobilioris naturae, sicut furiosum esse quoddam bonum est cani, quod tamen malum est homini rationem habenti: possibile tamen est in homine secundum sensibilem et corporalem naturam in qua cum brutis communicat, esse quandam inclinationem ad furorem qui est homini malum." Comparable is Thomas's assertion at *ST* 1-2.55.3 ad 2 that a lower power can be "perfect" in vice, even though such a perfection is evil simply speaking with respect to human nature, and hence cannot be called a *virtus humana*.

¹¹⁷ *Sent. VII Ethic.* 1 (47:381-82.145-54): "primus est ex conversatione gentis, sicut apud Barbaros, qui rationabilibus legibus non reguntur, propter malam convivendi consuetudinem aliqui incidunt in malitiam bestialem; secundo contingit aliquibus propter aegritudines et orbates, idest amissiones carorum, ex quibus in amentiam incidunt et quasi bestiales fiunt; tertio propter magnum augmentum malitiae, ex quo contingit quod quosdam superexcellenter infamamus dicentes eos bestiales." *Super De Trin.*, expositio prohemi (50:78.109-11): "monstra dicuntur homines qui in corpore humano cor gerunt bestiale, propter peccatum bestiis similes effecti in affectu."

beast."¹¹⁸ Man becomes brutal or bestial whenever and to the extent that the order of reason, by which he is constituted in his natural dignity, is lost. It is in this way that *any* sinful act, whether of anger, lust, gluttony, pride, or some other vice, can rightly be described as "subhuman" behavior which, if sufficiently grave and repeated often enough, leads at last to a bestial character for which living beneath or below reason has become connatural, a "second nature." Such a man is then called, by way of opprobrium, a dog, a pig, a bear, or whatever beast he is most like. Commenting on Aristotle's notion of bestial vice, Thomas argues that the harmony of human affections can be perverted in such a way that it does not go beyond the limits of a human life (and this is incontinence or human wickedness, comparable to a sickness from which one can naturally recover), or it can be altogether corrupted, so that it goes beyond the limits of a human life, "in likeness to the desires of some brute animal, say a lion, bear, or pig, and this is what is called brutishness. And it is just as if the make-up of a man's body had been changed into the make-up of a lion or a pig."¹¹⁹ If the sinner's evil-doing grows to the point where it gravely violates or jeopardizes the common good of society, he cedes his right to be a protected member of the political community. Civil authorities may, and sometimes must, deal with him as with a dangerous animal, "for a bad man is worse than a beast and is more harmful."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ *De Regno* 1.3 (42:453.134-41): "homo absque ratione secundum animi sui libidinem presidens nichil differt a bestia; unde Salomon dicit 'Leo rugiens et ursus esuriens, princeps impius super populum pauperem'; et ideo a tyrannis se abscondunt homines sicut a crudelibus bestiis, idemque videtur tyranno subici et bestie seuienti substerni."

¹¹⁹ *Sent. VII Ethic.* 1 (47:380-81.62-74): "uno igitur modo potest contingere perversitas in tali consonantia ita quod non exeatur extra limites humanae vitae et tunc dicitur simpliciter incontinentia vel malitia humana, sicut et aegritudo humana corporalis in qua salvari potest natura humana; alio modo potest corrumpi contemperantia humanarum affectionum ita quod progrediatur ultra limites humanae vitae in similitudinem affectionum alicuius bestiae, puta leonis, ursi aut porci, et hoc est quod vocatur bestialitas et est simile sicut si ex parte corporis complexio alicuius mutaretur in complexionem leoninam vel porcinam."

¹²⁰ *ST* 2-2.64.2 ad 3 (9:68): "homo peccando ab ordine rationis recedit: et ideo decedit a dignitate humana, prout scilicet homo est naturaliter liber et propter seipsum existens, et incidit quodammodo in servitutem bestiarum, ut scilicet de ipso ordinetur secundum quod est utile aliis; secundum illud Psalm.: 'Homo, cum in honore esset, non intellexit: comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis'; et Prov. xi dicitur: 'Qui stultus est serviet sapienti.' Et ideo quamvis hominem in sua dignitate manentem occidere sit secundum se malum, tamen hominem peccatorem occidere potest esse bonum, sicut occidere bestiam: peior enim est malus homo bestia, et plus nocet, ut Philosophus dicit, in I Polit. et in VII Ethic." Lest one come away with the impression that Thomas is eager to see the death penalty enacted, one should note, first, that he speaks of sins serious enough to make someone fit to be treated as a wild beast, evidently crimes of the first magnitude, and second, that he says it *can* be good ("potest esse bonum") to punish such criminals with death, even as it is necessary at times to kill a rabid animal that threatens to injure people. See *SCG* 3.144 and *ST* 2-2.64.1-2; cf. *ST* 2-2.10.8, 11.3, and 25.6 ad 2.

A glutton whose belly is his god seems to be afflicted with a kind of madness that pushes him well past the bounds of nature. As Thomas explains in the commentary on the *Ethics*, "nature desires nothing except that needs be supplied; hence that someone should take [food or drink] beyond need is an excess beyond nature. And thus such people are called belly-mad (*gastrimargi*), from *gastir* meaning belly and *margos* meaning raving or insanity, as if they had a raving or insane stomach, because they stuff nature beyond need."¹²¹ The gluttony that appears to be localized in mouth, throat, and stomach turns its disorder back upon the man, transforming his soul into the interior image of what he does externally. A raving stomach produces in due course a raving man; this is why a lesser vice like gluttony is said to lead invariably to vices that are worse, more interior and more corruptive.¹²² This reciprocal likeness and causality between flesh and spirit, much dwelled upon by moralists such as Gregory the Great, is grounded in a keen appreciation of the intimate union of body and soul, whereby each acts upon and mirrors the other:

According to the order of nature, on account of the tying-together of the powers of the soul in one essence and of the soul and body in the one being of the composite, the higher and the lower powers, and even the body and the soul, let flow from one to the other whatever superabounds in any one of them; and hence it is that from the apprehension of the soul the body is changed with regard to heat and cold, and sometimes even to the extent of health and sickness and even to death; for it does happen that a person meets with death from joy or sorrow or love. And hence it is that there occurs in the glorified body an overflowing of the very glory of the soul . . . and contrariwise, a change of the body overflows into the soul. For a soul joined to the body imitates its makeup in point of madness or docility and other such things, as is said in the *Book of Six Principles*.¹²³

¹²¹ *Sent. III Ethic.* 20 (47:185.136–42): "natura enim non concupiscit nisi quod suppleatur indigentia, unde quod aliquis assumat ultra indigentiam est excessus supra naturam. Et ideo tales dicuntur gastrimargi, a *gastir*, quod est venter, et *margos*, quod est furor vel insania, quasi furor vel insania ventris, quia scilicet implent naturam praeter indigentiam."

¹²² In this connection one might recall a popular patristic and monastic genre, the treatise on the seven deadly sins (influential in Thomas's structuring of the *De malo*), which typically emphasizes the connection between lesser fleshly sins and greater spiritual ones, showing how the former when indulged initiate a downward spiral into the latter.

¹²³ *DV* 26.10 (22:784.162–81): "secundum naturae ordinem, propter colligantiam virium animae in una essentia et animae et corporis in uno esse compositi, vires superiores et inferiores, et etiam corpus et anima invicem in se effluunt quod in aliquo eorum superabundat; et inde est quod ex apprehensione animae transmutatur corpus secundum calorem et frigus, et quandoque etiam usque ad sanitatem et aegritudinem et usque ad mortem; contingit enim aliquem ex gaudio vel tristitia vel amore mortem incurrere. Et inde est quod ex ipsa gloria animae fit redundantia in corpus glorificandum . . . et similiter est e convero, quod transmutatio

On Jesus' words "we piped to you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not weep" (Luke 7:32), Thomas quotes Gregory of Nyssa: "Singing and lamentation are nothing else but an *excessus*, the one of joy, the other of sorrow. Now, a certain harmonious melody resounds from a musical instrument in such a way that when a person is moved to tap his foot and make a fitting movement in his body he shows his internal response to the music."¹²⁴ In spite of his critique of astrological determinism, Thomas willingly grants that men who have lost something of their self-possession and self-rulership by living immersed in their passions are that much more likely to be swayed and moved by celestial influences, making them more akin to animals driven by instinctive appetites than men living by reason and will.¹²⁵

Nevertheless, as tempering words like *quasi* and *sicut* indicate, it would be false to think that insanity, regardless of its magnitude, actually strips away reason and leaves a person mindless, no more than a beast. As long as a man remains alive, he must be living by and through the rational soul, even if its higher powers are fettered. Thomas is careful to point out that "those who are frantic or mad lack the use of reason *per accidens*, i.e., owing to some impediment in a bodily organ, and not, like irrational animals, owing to the lack of a rational soul."¹²⁶ However much the shining of the light of reason may be

corporis in animam redundat. Anima enim coniuncta corpori eius complexiones imitatur secundum amentiam vel docilitatem et alia huiusmodi, ut dicitur in libro sex principiorum."

¹²⁴ *Glossa continua super Evangelia, seu Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia [CA] Luc. 7, §5* (Marietti, 2:103): "Canticum autem et lamentatio nil aliud est quam excessus, hoc quidem gaudii, illud vero moeroris. Resonat autem quaedam consona melodia ex organo musico, secundum quam dum homo pede et motu consono corporis commovetur, intrinsecam dispositionem manifestat; et ideo dicit [cantavimus vobis tibiis, et non saltastis;] lamentavimus, et non plorastis."

¹²⁵ *SCG* 3.85 (14:256, Sciendum): "Interdum etiam ex corporibus caelestibus actus humanus causatur in quantum ex indispositione corporis aliqui amentes efficiuntur, usu rationis privati. In quibus proprie electio non est, sed moventur aliquo naturali instinctu, sicut et bruta. Manifestum autem est, et experimento cognitum, quod tales occasiones, sive sint exteriores sive sint interiores, non sunt causa necessaria electionis: cum homo per rationem possit eis resistere vel obedire. Sed plures sunt qui impetus naturales sequuntur, pauciores autem, scilicet soli sapientes, qui occasiones male agendi et naturales impetus non sequuntur." Thomas opines that the heavenly bodies exercise a physical influence on all sublunary bodies, and he extends this causality even to the body of Christ prior to the resurrection: *ST* 3.12.4 ad 3. In several places Thomas mentions "lunatics" and discusses the extent to which their behavior is caused by the lunar cycle. *Super Matt.* 4, n.392 (Marietti, 60): "Lunatici proprie dicuntur qui patiuntur infirmitatem cuiusdam amentiae in defectu lunae"; cf. *Super Matt.* 17 n.1458 (Marietti, 222): "lunaticus proprie est qui secundum statum lunae alienatur."

¹²⁶ *ST* 3.68.12 ad 2 (12:105): "furiosi vel amentes carent usu rationis per accidens, scilicet propter aliquod impedimentum organi corporalis, non autem propter defectum animae rationalis, sicut bruta animalia." This is in reply to an objection: "Praeterea, homo bruta animalia superexcedit in hoc quod habet rationem. Sed furiosi et amentes non habent usum rationis, et quandoque etiam in eis non expectatur, sicut expectatur in pueris"—an argument that clearly

dimmed by impediments in the lower powers, the human soul can never be deprived of this light, since it pertains to the very nature of the rational soul.¹²⁷

Insanity is not always a condition into which a previously sane man falls or lapses on account of excessive passion, a massive bodily change like getting struck in the head, or a corrupt way of life. Some are simply born in the condition of not having the use of reason, and their lack of reasoning ability, in no way their own fault, cannot be accounted brutishness. At three places in his works, the context identical (whether the sacraments should be given to the mentally disturbed or handicapped), Thomas draws a distinction *de amentibus*: "certain ones are called 'mindless' in a broad sense, because they have a weak mind, just as something can be called invisible which is but poorly seen; and nevertheless they are in some way teachable. . . . Certain others, on the contrary, are altogether lacking the judgment of reason, and these were either such from birth . . . or they [later] fell into madness."¹²⁸ Another text adds a nuance: among those who are mentally unsound either from birth or from a later sickness, some have never had lucid intervals, while others do have lucid intervals.¹²⁹

Nor should we think that madness is caused only by physical factors (the bodily indispositions or vehement passions so often mentioned), for some have lapsed into madness "by the exercise of spiritual operations."¹³⁰ As they were no strangers to vice, the medievals were no strangers to mental illness. William of Auvergne gives

numerous examples of unfortunates who come to believe that they are Christ, the Holy Spirit, or Antichrist. Less loftily, Jean Gerson claims that he knew a

anticipates the functionalist position of those who equate human dignity or rights with some kind of distinctively human *functioning*, in order to be able to conclude to the permissibility of killing some humans who are not "functional" in the respect viewed as relevant. Thomas makes the same point about the *per accidens* nature of a lack of reason at *ST* 1-2.67.3.

¹²⁷ *ST* 2-2.15.1 (8:118): "Et hoc lumen [scil. lumen naturalis rationis], cum pertineat ad speciem animae rationalis, nunquam privatur ab anima. Impeditur tamen quandoque a proprio actu per impedimenta virium inferiorum, quibus indiget intellectus humanus ad intelligendum, sicut patet in amentibus et furiosis."

¹²⁸ *IV Sent.* 9.5.3 (396, §195-96): "Quidam enim dicuntur large amentes, quia debilem mentem habent, sicut dicitur invisibile quod male videtur; et tamen sunt aliquo modo docibiles. . . . Quidam vero sunt omnino carentes iudicio rationis; et isti vel fuerunt tales a nativitate . . . vel inciderunt in amentiam."

¹²⁹ *IV Sent.* 4.3.1.3 (184, §211-12). Cf. *ST* 3.68.12 (12:105): "circa amentes et furiosos est distinguendum. Quidam enim sunt a nativitate tales, nulla habentes lucida intervalla, in quibus etiam nullus usus rationis apparet. . . . Alii vero sunt amentes qui ex sana mente quam habuerunt prius, in amentiam inciderunt. . . . Quidam vero sunt qui, etsi a nativitate fuerint furiosi et amentes, habent tamen aliqua lucida intervalla, in quibus recta ratione uti possunt."

¹³⁰ *II Sent.* 22.2.2 (561): "et ita post sequens peccatum ex toto excusaret, ut patet in his qui exercitio spiritualium operationum in amentiam vertuntur."

learned man of science who thought he was a rooster, and even sang like one. He fled into the woods, not to be heard from again. Another individual believed he had grown a horn on his forehead; others thought they had feet of iron (and stomped around), while still others thought they had feet of glass (and were afraid to walk).¹³¹

The ancients supplied a famous example, Cratylus, who, feeling that stability of reference is impossible if all things are in flux, "finally arrived at such dementia," says Thomas, "that he thought that he should not express anything in words, but in order to express what he wanted he would only move his finger."¹³² It is fitting at this point to recall Reginald's anxieties when Thomas hung up his writing tools after the mystical experience of 6 December 1273. Bartholomew of Capua relates that the *socius* urged his Master to continue, fearing he might have lost his mind from too much study ("timens ne propter multum studium aliquam incurrisset amentiam").¹³³

The many kinds of *infirmetas rationis* or *insania secundum animam* have this much in common: "irrationality and madness, fury and concupiscence, imply a divergence of the will from right judgment of intellect or reason."¹³⁴ In the end, it is exactly this lack of reason, this weakening or loss of it when it should be operative, that makes the condition of *amentia* such a horrible thing, little different from death:

It seems that some transformation could happen to a virtuous man that would altogether take away his happiness by completely hindering the operation of

¹³¹ Dyan Elliott, "The Physiology of Rapture and Female Spirituality," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis, York Studies in Medieval Theology 1 (Woodbridge, 1997), 148 and n. 34, citing William of Auvergne, *De universo* 2.2, cap. 35, and Jean Gerson, *De passionibus animae*, cap. 20.

¹³² *In Metaphys.* 4.12 n.684 (Marietti, 188): "Et hanc opinionem habuit Cratylus, qui ad ultimum ad hanc dementia devenit, quod opinatus est quod non oportebat aliquid verbo dicere, sed ad exprimendum quod volebat, movebat solum digitum."

¹³³ See *Processus canonizationis sancti Thomae Aquinatis, Neapoli, LXXIX*, in *Thomae Aquinatis vitae fontes praecipue*, ed. Angelico Ferrua (Alba, 1968), 319. The early biographers of Friar Thomas speak forcefully of the saint's habitual *abstractio mentis*, accompanied by the telltale sign of enrapturement, *alienatio a sensibus*; see, e.g., *Ystoria sancti Thome de Aquino de Guillaume de Tocco (1323)*, ed. Claire le Brun-Gouanvic, Studies and Texts 127 (Toronto, 1996), 130, 154, 174. Concerning the mystical experience of December 1273 and its significance for the interpretation of Aquinas's work, see my "Golden Straw: St. Thomas and the Ecstatic Practice of Theology," *Nova et Vetera* [English ed.] 2 (2004): 61-90.

¹³⁴ *II Sent.* 7.2.1 ad 1 (187): "Irrationalitas autem et amentia, furor et concupiscentia important obliquitatem voluntatis a recto iudicio intellectus vel rationis." The desperate words of Ophelia over Hamlet's apparent mental collapse are a perfect poetic summary of Aquinas's views on the subject: cf. *Hamlet* III.1.150-61, as given in *The Complete Works*, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York, 1977). Notice the emphasis on Hamlet's being "quite, quite down," reminiscent of Thomas's speaking at *ST* 1-2.28.3 of bad cognitive *extasis* as a *depressio*.

virtue, e.g., if through sickness he incurred a furious temper or loss of control or any other mental breakdown. But since happiness can only be sought in a human life, which is according to reason, when the use of reason is gone, such a life is gone. Hence, in what concerns a human life, the condition of madness is to be considered like the condition of death.¹³⁵

That for St. Thomas the "condition of death" would be, from a purely natural standpoint, something horrible and fearful—much like the Hades of Greek mythology or the Sheol of some Hebrew writings—is impressively demonstrated by Mary F. Rousseau.¹³⁶

As is clear from the texts discussed up to this point, not every sort of losing or going out of one's mind is an instance of *amentia* or *dementia* properly speaking, just as not every displacement or suspension of reason is unnatural or contrary to nature (or, for that matter, contrary to grace). While all the cases examined so far involve a certain *likeness* to death inasmuch as the active use of reason, the human power *par excellence*, is impeded, not all may be likened to death in the same way or with the same fittingness.¹³⁷ The use of reason and with it the exercise of virtue can be interrupted by things as natural and good as sleep or sexual intercourse; one even acts virtuously by suspending the use of reason when appropriate.¹³⁸ One can become delirious from

¹³⁵ *Sent. I Ethic.* 16 (47:59.148–56): "Videtur tamen aliqua transmutatio virtuoso posse accidere, quae omnino auferat eius felicitatem impediendo totaliter operationem virtutis, puta si per aegritudinem, maniam vel furiam seu quamcumque amentiam incurrat. Sed, cum felicitas non quaeratur nisi in vita humana, quae est secundum rationem, deficiente usu rationis deficit talis vita, unde status amentiae reputandus est quantum ad vitam humanam sicut status mortis."

¹³⁶ Mary F. Rousseau, "Elements of a Thomistic Philosophy of Death," *The Thomist* 43 (1979): 581–602. Prescinding from supernatural assistance, separated souls are "diminished knowers, diminished lovers, diminished images of God" who "could well make their own the words with which the shade of Achilles greeted Odysseus: 'How did you find your way down to the dark where these dim-witted dead are camped forever, the after-images of used-up men?'" (ibid., 599). For a more optimistic interpretation, see Patrick Quinn, "The Relationship Between Human Transcendence and Death in the Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas," *Milltown Studies* 25 (1990): 63–75.

¹³⁷ This connection to death takes on a new significance in light of the ways in which death, the dying to self demanded by love of God and neighbor, is involved in the Christian life. The *extasis* of the moral and spiritual life is not itself a death, for it is not corruptive, but it presupposes the death of what Aristotle would call ignoble self-love and St. Paul, the old man.

¹³⁸ According to Thomas, there are times when it is virtuous for man to live—that is, to act or to permit activity—"outside of" or "beyond" reason; one might speak of moments of legitimate or praiseworthy unknowing, either by transcending reason in a hyperintensity of wakefulness or by falling beneath it or letting it be blocked in a kind of unconsciousness, swoon, or mist. Of the former, the noblest example of activity beyond reason would be the union of *agnosia* spoken of by Dionysius in the *Mystical Theology* or by the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*; the very act of supernatural faith, the wayfarer's uninterrupted dark night, shares the character of this union with the God who dwells in inaccessible light. Of the

drinking too much wine, which indicates a moral failing, or from suffering a fever, which does not. One might be born with a mental disability or one might lapse into it as a result of violent passion. The "absence of mind" brought on by anger or gluttony, jealousy or lust, admits of as many degrees of intensity as the passion that causes it; the ensuing behavior can range from something trivial, say forgetting one's table manners, to something terrible, falling into beastliness. Hence, to state accurately what it means to "go out of one's mind," one must always take note of the kinds, causes, and degrees of *excessus mentis*. Reasoning is more impeded in the insane than in the sleeping.¹³⁹ By recognizing that concupiscence is more natural to man than fury, and certainly more natural than drunkenness, one would be inclined to judge it more leniently. A further indication of the difference between desire and drunkenness would be the latter's guaranteed consequence, the loss of the use of reason, which is by no means a necessary consequence of the former.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, a habit of getting drunk is worse than gluttony, because the matter with which sobriety is concerned—drink that can inebriate and, as Thomas puts it, mix up the head on account of its volatility, *fumositas*—is of its nature more potent than other food and drink, and so deserving of special care. A measured use of drink brings strength, while excess brings harm, because it hinders the use of reason.¹⁴¹

EXCESSUS AND OTHERNESS

As can be gathered from the root word *ex-cedere* and its uses, *excessus* always implies a comparison, proportion, or relation: one thing must be in excess of another, or the same thing must be somehow in excess of itself. We can understand this point better by considering for a moment an Aristotelian concept likewise embedded in multiplicity and reliant on proportion, *dunamis*.¹⁴² Having distinguished the various meanings of *dunamis* in *Metaphysics*

second kind of unknowing, evident examples are sleep and sexual intercourse (*ST* 1-2.18.9 ad 3; *ST* 2-2.153.2 ad 2). Thomas enunciates the broad principle that all operations that fulfill genuine needs of life belongs to the *vita activa* which provides for such needs by orderly actions; hence these actions are virtuous (*ST* 2-2.179.2 ad 3).

¹³⁹ *ST* 3.68.12 obj. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *ST* 2-2.150.4 ad 3 (10:189): "concupiscentia non totaliter ligat rationem, sicut ebrietas, nisi forte sit tanta quod faciat hominem insanire."

¹⁴¹ Cf. *ST* 2-2.149.1.

¹⁴² *Dunamis* is not unrelated to *ekstasis*. As Kevin Corrigan shows, for Aristotle *ekstasis* is always connected with change, whether it be perfective or corruptive, while ancient authors in general understand *ekstasis* to be connected with motion, the act of the potential as potential ("Ecstasy and Ecstasy in Some Early Pagan and Christian Mystical Writings," in *Greek and Me-*

5.12, Aristotle concludes that "the proper definition of the primary kind of capacity [potency, ability] will be a source of change in another thing or in the same thing qua other" (1020a5-6). For example, an animal can move locally because one part of its body actually in motion is capable of moving another, as yet inactive, part capable of being acted upon (and for this reason, the animal body must be heterogeneous, constituted of various sorts of parts: flexible tissues, inflexible bones, etc.).¹⁴³ More fundamentally, the animal as a whole is able to go from being at rest to being in motion because it is not simple but manifold: when stirred up by the cognition of an appetible object, the animal's appetite, made to be *in actu* by the appetible *in actu*, is then the principle by which the resting members are brought from potency to act.¹⁴⁴ Appetite is a source of change in the same thing qua other, since the diversity of the powers of appetite, of local motion, and of limbs enables one and the same animal to move itself from rest, and once in motion, to continue moving itself. In short, composition, multiplicity, or manifoldness is a basic prerequisite for the sort of *dunamis* found in things that are not, of their essence, simply *in actu*, that is, things whose being is pure actuality.¹⁴⁵

It is no different with the *excessus* whereby one and the same thing is said to exceed itself or to be outside of itself. Something can admit of excess or stand apart from itself to the extent that it is not simple but manifold, not al-

dieval Studies in Honor of Leo Sweeney, S.J., ed. William J. Carroll and John J. Furlong [New York, 1994], 27-38). One might take this as sound evidence that *ekstasis* is—or is perceived to be—bound up with *dunamis*, with potentiality; and this connection already indicates the basic reason why Thomas denies that God can be ecstatic *sensu stricto*, although the kind of *ekstasis* that belongs to him is the source and perfection of creaturely *ekstasis*. I will return to this point.

¹⁴³ *De partibus animalium* 2.1 speaks of the difference between homogeneous and heterogeneous parts, 2.9 on bones and muscles. *De historia animalium* summarizes the motions that belong to various animal genera and species, *De motu animalium* gives an account of "the common cause of any sort of animal movement whatsoever" (698a5-6), and *De progressu animalium* investigates the organs involved in animal motion. In these works Aristotle proposes the account we have just summarized.

¹⁴⁴ See *De anima* 3.9-11 (432a15-434a21); *Sent. III De anima* 14-16. The principle underlying this argument—that nothing in potency, insofar as it is in potency, can reduce itself to act, i.e., be the cause of its own actuation, but rather, must be actuated by something already in act, which communicates actuality univocally or equivocally to the effect—is the foundation of all the chief arguments of metaphysics, such as the primacy of form over matter and of the soul over the body, the *quinque viae* (evidently the first, second, and third, implicitly the fourth and fifth), the total dependence of the creature's existence and perfections upon self-subsistent *esse*, the truth that the created will is a moved mover, etc.

¹⁴⁵ Tradition has named this sort of *dunamis* "passive potency," the capacity to be changed or acted upon by another (i.e., a patient's receiving of actuality from an agent), to prevent confusion with "active potency," the power to change or act upon another (i.e., an agent's giving of actuality to a patient). Aristotle already makes the distinction clearly, though he does not use this pair of terms. See Aristotle, *Metaphys.* 9.8; and Aquinas, *In Metaphys.* 9.7-9.

together one but composite. Hence, adapting Aristotle's definition of *dunamis*, we may define *excessus* as "a going beyond another thing or the same thing qua other." If there were no otherness in a subject, there could be no *excessus a seipso*, no possibility of the kind of separation from or motion out of oneself implied in the very word *ex-cedere*. This is the fundamental reason why God cannot surpass, fall beneath, or stand outside of himself. He who simply *is*, infinitely, unchangeably, eternally, cannot be "beside himself": "it belongs *per accidens* to God to be referred to another outside himself."¹⁴⁶ In contrast, although man is truly one substance with one form, two "natures" are found in him,¹⁴⁷ two principles united without confusion: the intellectual nature and the sensitive, the powers of reason and rational appetite and the powers of sensation and sensitive appetite, the self-subsistent spiritual soul and the corruptible body. Always we see Thomas arraying the human powers in terms of the contrast between the spiritual, intellectual, or rational, and the bodily, sensitive, or animal.¹⁴⁸ It belongs to man's proper good to keep the distinct but related orders of powers *well* ordered among themselves by the mind's free governance, unified in the service of loving and contemplating God as origin and goal of all reality. But there is a further dimension to man's good, opening up a further duality—human and divine, natural and supernatural. By the divine actualization of their obediential passive potency, the higher powers of the soul are made to attain objects that exceed the limits of human nature. The supernatural good for man is to order *all* that he is, spiritual and fleshly, rational and sensitive, to God, who with a love altogether "excessive" (cf. John 3:16) raises the human being to fellowship with himself.

The contrast is clear. Madness is an *excessus* beyond oneself, because in this condition one is drawn away from the intellectual nature most proper to man and cast down into the sensitive nature he shares with brute animals. Grace, too, brings about an *excessus* from oneself, yet here one is drawn upwards into participation of a higher life; the creature is elevated beyond the

¹⁴⁶ *I Sent.* 30.1 ad 2 (703): "per accidens convenit Deo referri ad aliud extra se."

¹⁴⁷ The "two natures" of man are mentioned in several texts. For example, in the prologue to *ST* 1.75 he speaks of man as being composed *ex spirituali et corporali substantia*, and at *ST* 2-2.25.7 he notes that good men judge the *rationalem naturam* to be primary in themselves, whereas the bad cede primacy to the *naturam sensitivam et corporalem*. See also *ST* 1-2.10.3 ad 2, cited in n. 93 above.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas identifies *homo interior* and *anima*. The interior man is the *pars intellectiva* distinguished from the *pars sensitiva cum corpore*, which is the exterior man (*ST* 1.75.4 ad 1 [5:201]). In the scriptural commentaries the interior man is said to be the *ratio* or *mens*; see *Super Eph.* 3.4; *Super Rom.* 7.4; and *Super II Cor.* 4.5. These commentaries speak also of *homo carnalis* and *homo spiritualis*; the latter is defined as "pars animae . . . a Spiritu Dei et illuminatur secundum intellectum et inflammatur secundum affectum et voluntatem" (*Super I Cor.* 2.3 n.117 [Marietti, 1:255]; cf. *Super Rom.* 7.3). See *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 7.1:661.

limits of its own natural life. Each is an *excessus a propria natura*, but the one is corruptive because it debases, making a man *less* or *lower* than he is by nature, whereas the other is perfective because it elevates, making him *more* or *higher* than he is by nature. Yet neither debasement nor elevation would be possible unless man were manifold, so that he could abandon the good of his better part for the good of the lower, or even, as it were, abandon the good of himself as a certain whole for the good of a whole better than himself, as when a citizen sacrifices his life for the common good of his people, or when a Christian relinquishes marriage, property, and self-determination so as to imitate and participate more perfectly in the life of Christ, who, being true God, is the common good of the human race and of the entire universe.¹⁴⁹

Although I have spoken here primarily of the *excessus a seipso* of the madman (to which correspond also a number of suggestive texts in Aquinas concerning the *excessus mentis* of the lover of God¹⁵⁰), this notion cannot be restricted to human psychic or spiritual phenomena. The fact of metaphysical boundaries implied in the notion of *excessus* leads irresistibly to a further and more universal conclusion. Since composition of potency and act is found in every creature—whether, as among material things, composition of prime matter and the substantial form through which *esse* comes, or, as in the angels, composition simply of *essentia* and *esse*—the creature as such, in its finitude and non-eternity, expressions of its manifoldness, lives a continual *excessus* of self-displacement and dependency. Reflection on being in place or acting in a place, too, can illuminate creaturely *extasis*. The *extasis* that belongs to God is founded upon his ubiquity, whereas the creature's *extasis* is rooted in its singularity, its being contained under limits.¹⁵¹ *Extasis* taken strictly is as intrinsically connected with finitude as the divine *extasis* of crea-

¹⁴⁹ See *Super I Cor.* 12.3 n.753 (Marietti, 1:377): "Estis membra dependentia de Christo membro, quod quidem dicitur membrum secundum humanitatem, secundum quam praecipue dicitur ecclesiae caput. Nam secundum divinitatem non habet rationem membri aut partis, cum sit commune bonum totius universi."

¹⁵⁰ For example, on *extasis* in the life of St. Paul, see *DV* 13.5 corp. and 18.5 arg. 2 et ad 2; *Super II Cor.* 5.3 and 12.1; and *ST* 2.175.6. On ecstatic conditions of other holy men, see *Super Heb.* 12.3 (Isaac); *Super Ps.* 17, §11 (the Apostles); *Super Ps.* 22, §2 (being drunk with divine love); and *Super Ps.* 30, §§1 and 19 (David). On the mystical sleep of Adam during which Eve was formed, see *DV* 18.1 arg. 14 et ad 14 and 18.5 arg. 2 et ad 2; *CA Matt.* 19, §1; and *Super Matt.* 19.1. On *extasis* as an effect of love, see n. 39 above.

¹⁵¹ Hence, so far from being *less* "ecstatic," God's metaphorical *extasis* is, in terms of its effect, as much more perfect than the creature's literal *extasis* as his metaphorical working, desiring, or getting angry is, in terms of its effect, more perfect than the creature's literal work, desire, or anger. None can work as ecstatically, desire as effectively, punish as thoroughly as God can do, precisely because he is not ecstatic, needy, or angry. This claim strictly parallels Thomas's account of the difference between divine and creaturely knowledge and love (*ST* 1.14.8 ad 3 and 20.2). See also n. 165 below.

tion is connected with infinity; and as one consequence of finitude is locative presence, so one consequence of infinity is omnipresence, which, far from depending on place, creates places for beings by the indivisible immanence of the *causa essendi*.¹⁵²

The question of the relationship between temporality and *extasis* is more complicated.¹⁵³ However, this much can be said: temporality is an aspect of *extasis* for temporal beings, whereas the eternity that is convertible with the divine being belongs uniquely to the divine *extasis* which is ontologically simple, as the definition of eternity well conveys: *interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio*.¹⁵⁴ Explaining in his *Sentences* commentary why "He who is" is the name most proper to God, Thomas's first argument appeals to the perfection of the divine *esse*:

For that is perfect of which there is nothing outside itself. But our being has something of it outside itself, for it is without something of itself which is now past, and something [else] which is in the future. In the divine being, however, nothing is either past or future; and therefore he has his whole perfect being, and on account of this, to him, speaking in regard to other things [i.e., other perfections], properly belongs being.¹⁵⁵

Consider M.-D. Chenu's remark: "Time for the Hebrews, in the perspective of an organic progression and continuous maturing, is akin to a permanent creation, a continuous bringing to birth; it is described in the terminology of 'generation.'" ¹⁵⁶ Creatures are always being born in time, are always changing for better or for worse. Their being *now* is always a being *from* the past *towards* the future. The creature is being shaped ahead of time, as it were, by the *extasis* of the present moment which reaches into the future, and its having-been-shaped is the testimony it bears to the reality of the past which is now outside of the creature.¹⁵⁷ In Chenu's words again, the creature's "present

¹⁵² See *ST* 1.8, esp. art. 2.

¹⁵³ The angels are ecstatic in their being and operations, but they exist outside of the worldly time that depends upon the motion of bodies.

¹⁵⁴ *ST* 1.10.1 (4:94).

¹⁵⁵ *I Sent.* 8.1.1 (194-95): "Illud enim est perfectum cuius nihil est extra ipsum. Esse autem nostrum habet aliquid sui extra se: deest enim aliquid quod jam de ipso praeteriit, et quod futurum est. Sed in divino esse nihil praeteriit nec futurum est: et ideo totum esse suum habet perfectum, et propter hoc sibi proprie respectu aliorum convenit esse." For discussion of this passage and others like it, see Lawrence Dewan, "St. Thomas, Joseph Owens, and Existence," *The New Scholasticism* 56 (1982): 399-441.

¹⁵⁶ M.-D. Chenu, *Faith and Theology*, trans. Denis Hickey (New York, 1968), 120.

¹⁵⁷ Throughout his *The Metaphysics of Love* (New York, 1962), Frederick D. Wilhelmsen develops Thomas's idea that man is a being that has something of itself always outside itself; see esp. 23-24. Armand A. Maurer's *St. Thomas and Historicity* (Milwaukee, 1979) also contains pertinent observations on this topic.

has by no means the required intensity" to be the image of eternity, "and is not capable of even relative immobility. . . . We fall back into time, into lived time, which soon becomes time lost and gone"¹⁵⁸; time "is a wound through which our life pours out."¹⁵⁹ Wilhelmsen sees the root of man's existential instability in the real composition of being and essence—a certain lack of self-identity implicit in being *created*, which makes the creature, in a sense, a stranger to itself:

Man is always estranged from his essential being. This estrangement forms human existence into a tension between being and non-being in all its "forms." . . . [W]e can say that existence is the situation in which we encounter our being as well as our non-being, ourselves as standing inside and outside of being. God, in whom there is no estrangement, transcends the essence-existence polarity.¹⁶⁰

As the text from the *Sentences* teaches, it belongs to the being of the creature as such that it be, or have being, outside of itself, as regards its inherent finitude and its dependency on God who constitutes it in its perfections, of which *esse* is the first. Central to this dependency is the fundamental *part to whole* relationship of the creature vis-à-vis its intrinsic final end, the order of the universe, and its extrinsic final end, God. Being by its very nature part of a whole—more precisely, part of many concentric wholes—the creature is ordered to the whole not merely as to something superior to and in some sense constitutive of it but as to that which, in its very universality, is most causative of and integral to its own proper perfection.¹⁶¹ Motion, therefore, since it

¹⁵⁸ Chenu, *Faith and Theology*, 123–24.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 126. Chenu does not endorse this view, but presents it as the negative—and, as he sees it, superseded—pole of historical pessimism to which corresponds the positive pole of the economy of salvation, which is revealed as taking place in and through history. It would, however, be false to see the positive pole as engulfing the negative, for until the end of time our realm, destined for transfiguration, is still a realm of death and decay, which groans to be delivered and to be swallowed up in victory (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5).

¹⁶⁰ Wilhelmsen, *Metaphysics of Love*, 104–5.

¹⁶¹ It is from this perspective that the fundamental relationship of the *bonum privatum* and the *bonum commune* becomes evident. The *bonum commune* is not something over and above what is "good for me" personally; it is precisely what is best for and most perfective of me, simply speaking. That which is most commonly sharable is, in being shared, the most beneficial to all who partake of it. The definitive exposition of Thomas's position is that of Charles De Koninck, *On the Primacy of the Common Good*, which, along with its companion pieces *The Principle of the New Order* and *In Defense of Saint Thomas* as well as I. T. Eschmann's *In Defense of Maritain*, have been published in a translation by Sean Collins in *The Aquinas Review* 4 (1997). For recent discussions, see Gregory Froelich, "The Equivocal Status of *Bonum Commune*," *The New Scholasticism* 63 (1989): 38–57; idem, "Ultimate End and Common Good," *The Thomist* 57 (1993): 609–19; Lawrence Dewan, "Concerning the Person and the Common Good," *Études Maritainiennes/Maritain Studies* 5 (1989): 7–21; and Mary M. Keys,

aims at attaining something not yet had, is proper to the creature and foreign to God. Thomas's comment on Aristotle's refutation of the possibility of an infinite body in motion is also relevant at the theological level: "the infinite supports, i.e., sustains, itself, because it is in itself and not in another, for nothing contains it; and so it cannot be moved outside itself."¹⁶² In general, the perfect or the infinite may be defined as "that outside of which there is nothing."¹⁶³ The incompleteness and potentiality of the creature, on the other hand, is expressed in its concrete need, welling up from the exigency of its finite form, to go beyond itself towards objects of desire. "It cannot be said," we read in the *De potentia*, "that that which moves itself should desire nothing outside of itself, because [then] it would never be moved—for motion is for the sake of acquiring something extrinsic in some way."¹⁶⁴ All things other than God are in motion and thus are being moved (if we take motion broadly enough to include immanent activities of the perfect, such as operations of intellect and will), whereas God is not being moved but only moves others. He is not, except metaphorically speaking, "moved by love," whereas every-

"Personal Dignity and the Common Good: A Twentieth Century Thomistic Dialogue," in *Catholicism, Liberalism, and Communitarianism*, ed. Kenneth L. Grasso, Gerard V. Bradley, and Robert P. Hunt (Lanham, Md., 1995), 173–95.

¹⁶² *In Phys.* 3.9, §7 (2:129b): "Dixit enim quod fulcit, idest sustentat, infinitum seipsum, quia est in se et non in alio, cum nihil ipsum contineat; et sic non possit extra se moveri." Given what the infinite is, it cannot be contained; since it is altogether uncontained, it is everywhere, containing everything; thus it cannot move to where it was not before, nor, in fact, is any motion at all possible, since motion requires a place *outside of the mover* to which it is moving, and the infinite, as infinite, occupies all places. In short, the infinite is self-sufficient ("supports or sustains itself") because it is "in itself and not in another." The same argument can, with due modification, be made concerning God's infinity of *esse*.

¹⁶³ *Compendium theologiae* 1.56 (42:99.24): "perfectum est extra quod nichil est." The source of this statement is *Physics* 3, "infinitum est extra quod nihil est," which prompts Thomas in his commentary to explain the relationship between *infinitum*, *perfectum*, and *totum* (*In Phys.* 3.11). In the commentary on the *De caelo*, the notion of "extra quod nihil est" appears several times, e.g., *In De caelo* 1.3, §1 (3:9b): "antiqui dixerunt infinitum esse extra quod nihil est"; *ibid.* 2.5, §4 (3:140b): "perfectum dicitur esse illud extra quod nihil est accipere eorum quae possunt ipsi convenire, sicut homo dicitur esse perfectus cui non deest aliquid eorum quae ad hominem pertinent." The connection between *perfectum* and *infinitum* is considered in *DDN* 13.1 n.964 (Marietti, 360), where Thomas discusses why some ancients opposed the two: "perfectum opponitur infinito quia, ut dicitur in III Phys., infinitum est cuius quantitatem accipientibus, semper est aliquid ultra accipere; perfectum autem et totum est extra quod nihil est. Sic igitur creatura perfecta infinitati opponitur, sed Deus sua perfectione omnem infinitatem terminat quia quodcumque infinitum, divinae perfectioni comparatum, est finitum et terminatum." For discussion of these points, see Oliva Blanchette, "The Logic of Perfection in Aquinas," in *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, ed. David M. Gallagher (Washington, D.C., 1994), 107–30.

¹⁶⁴ *DP* 6.6 (Marietti, 174b): "non enim potest dici, quod movens seipsum, nihil desideret extra se, quia nunquam moveretur: motus enim est ad acquirendum aliquid extrinsecum aliquo modo." At *ST* 1.9.1 we likewise read that everything that moves acquires something by its motion.

thing a creature does relies on being literally moved by his love. This is the basic reason for God's pure liberality of giving, in contrast to the creature's inescapable neediness.¹⁶⁵ Consider the statement with which Corrigan concludes his overview of *ekstasis* in Greek thought from Plato to Dionysius and Gregory of Nyssa: "Ecstasy is intimately connected with natural movement or growth—physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual."¹⁶⁶

What about *supernatural* movement or growth? For this, too, Aquinas confidently uses the word *excessus*, whether to convey the mental state of a prophet in the grip of divine inspiration, or the selfless dedication to God and neighbor of a believer spurred on by divine love. A translator eager to bring out the kinship of this meaning of *excessus* with other meanings already discussed might well choose the path of least resistance, "excess." But in view of what has been learned from madness, it seems that a more literal translation is demanded: "going out of," exactly as in the phrase "she's going out of her mind." For Thomas, a visionary goes out of her mind because God *takes* her out of her mind, carrying her beyond what is connatural to the human soul. A lover of God goes out of herself because her affections are borne away from a narrow concern with her own good to a selfless love of others for their own sake. One begins to see a deeper rationale behind Thomas's decision, in some writings, to treat together *excessus mentis* or going out of one's mind, *raptus* or being carried away, and *extasis* or standing outside of oneself.¹⁶⁷

At the same time, these associated terms have to be distinguished if we wish to understand why Thomas never declares the Christian life an "enrap-turement" (*raptus*) but will describe it as an *extasis*,¹⁶⁸ or why he maintains that a friendship between human beings who are virtuous on a natural plane brings about genuine *extasis* yet not the *excessus mentis* of the lover of Christ.

¹⁶⁵ For Aquinas, God is the *only* one who gives without gaining anything from the giving (*ST* 1.9.1 and 44.4 ad 1; *SCG* 1.93 and 3.18; *DV* 23.4; and *DP* 7.10). "Only in God does love become entirely gratuitous, totally without a turning back upon self, and this is because God is absolutely simple, without the duality inherent in a dependent nature" (Teresa Mary DeFerrari, *The Problem of Charity for Self: A Study of Thomistic and Modern Theological Discussion* [Washington, D.C., 1963], 67). In giving good things to the creatures he loves, and for *their* sake—above all, in willing to men and angels a share in his life—God does what an ecstatic lover does, indeed he does it in a way that as far surpasses all that creaturely lovers can do as uncreated being surpasses created being.

¹⁶⁶ Corrigan, "Ecstasy and Ectasy," 37.

¹⁶⁷ All three terms—*extasis*, *excessus mentis*, *raptus*—are discussed at *DV* 13.2 ad 9 and *ST* 2-2.175.2. In other texts, *extasis* and *excessus mentis* are treated together: see *ST* 2-2.174.1; *Super Ps.* 30, §1; and *Super II Cor.* 5.3. There are, of course, many independent occurrences of each of the three terms.

¹⁶⁸ An important Thomistic nuance is lost if one renders *raptus* as "ecstasy" in the questions on prophecy from the *Secunda secundae*, as Roland Potter does in *Prophecy and Other Charisms* [translation of and commentary on *ST* 2-2.171-78] (New York, 1969), 95 ff.

For Aquinas, *extasis* or *excessus a seipso* is really, even if not fully, present whenever a person exceeds himself ("outdoes himself," one might say) on behalf of another, for love of the other—that is, when he wills and does the good for her, *because* it is hers. This is the meaning Thomas gives to *extasis* in the moral life of the human person, as contrasted with the *extasis* of charity belonging to the Christian or the rarer *extasis* belonging to the recipient of a prophetic or apostolic mission.¹⁶⁹

*
* *

We have followed a path from the most ordinary sense of *excessus*, according to which one number or dimension exceeds another, to a more extended sense according to which an object exceeds the capacity of a power (as the divine nature exceeds the capacity of the created intellect) or one power exceeds another in quantity of power (as intellection exceeds sensation in power for knowing and the kind of objects known), to the negative and positive aspects of *excessus* in natural and human *virtutes*, and finally to the *excessus a natura* and *excessus a ratione* characteristic of sickness, sin, and madness in their many different forms. Analysis of the ways in which madness and the spiritual disease of sin overthrow the rulership of reason has shown why it is appropriate to speak of *excessus a seipso* in a man who lacks the use of mind or loses it by going out of his mind, for in either case, the use of that better part which makes him what he is has fallen to the wayside.¹⁷⁰ It would require a separate discussion to see how, for Aquinas, this better part is exceeded in turn when the Spirit of God carries a man out of himself, and how love brings about the *extasis*, the self-transcendence, in which human perfection most of all consists.¹⁷¹

International Theological Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family, Gaming, Austria.

¹⁶⁹ For references to discussions in Aquinas of the various topics mentioned in this paragraph, see nn. 39, 40, 88, 150, and 167 above.

¹⁷⁰ As Thomas establishes in *ST* 1.93, the end or completion of the production of man is the *imago Dei*; this is what man most fundamentally *is*, and his perfection is measured by the degree to which the potentiality contained in this image is actualized in him, not merely by his having a mind (aa. 1-6) but by his active *use* of it (a. 7), and not by merely *any* use but rather by the highest: attaining union with God in loving contemplation (a. 8). The final perfection of the *imago Dei* coincides with the perfect union of man and God in the *extasis* of the beatific vision, a mystical union of creature and creator realized ontologically and exemplarily in the Incarnate Word.

¹⁷¹ See the references cited in n. 39. I wish to express my gratitude for the criticisms of anonymous reviewers and for Jonathan Black's invaluable assistance in making ready a final version.