

The Ecstasy of Love in Aquinas's *Commentary on the Sentences*

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In spite of thematic groupings in its four books, it is hard to avoid the impression that the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard suffer from a prevailing lack of order – a defect that must have been among Thomas Aquinas's chief motives for abandoning his attempt at a second *Sentences* commentary and for beginning the *Summa theologiae* instead¹. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the analysis of love in the *Scriptum super Sententiis* lacks the beautiful orderliness one comes to expect from the author of the *Summa theologiae*. Yet because the *Scriptum* is the work of a young man to whom pedagogical utility has not yet become the overriding concern it would later be, treatments of love in the *Scriptum* often contain insights or ideas that have no exact equivalent elsewhere. One of the more intriguing of these youthful discussions is the analysis of the nature of love and its effects in Book III, Distinction 27, where we find a remarkable passage on the *extasis amoris*, love's power to provoke ecstasy or "standing outside oneself."² Our curiosity stirred, we discover on closer inspection that Aquinas speaks of *extasis* not just here but in several passages of the *Scriptum*, always in connection with love. Now, while these texts do not go unmentioned in tables of *loci paralleli* and do surface in more nuanced studies of Aquinas's doctrine of love³, my impression is that their philosophical suggestiveness, their density as phenomenological descriptions of real-life experience, and their modest but indispensable role in the overall doctrine have been overlooked, or at least undervalued. Thus, it seems

¹ See J.-P. TORRELL, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 1: *The Person and His Work*. Trans. R. Royal. Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1996, 45-7, 144-5, 332. Several studies have been published to date on the so-called *Lectura Romana* or Roman Commentary on Book I of the *Sentences*; see L. E. BOYLE, "Alia lectura fratris Thome," in: *Mediaeval Studies* 45 (1983), 418-29; M. F. JOHNSON, "Alia lectura fratris thome': A List of the New Texts of St. Thomas Aquinas Found in Lincoln College, Oxford, MS. Lat. 95," in: *RTAM* 57 (1990), 34-61; J. F. BOYLE, "Aquinas' Roman Commentary on Peter Lombard," *Proceedings of the LXVIII Navarre Philosophical Meetings* (forthcoming). A critical edition of the text has been prepared by Leonard E. Boyle and John F. Boyle and is awaited from the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.

² For a summary of Aquinas's views on the *extasis amoris*, see P. A. KWASNIEWSKI, "St. Thomas, *Extasis*, and Union with the Beloved," in: *The Thomist* 61 (1997), 587-603.

³ An example of which is the valuable study by A. STÉVAUX, "La doctrine de la charité dans le commentaire des *Sentences* de saint Albert, de saint Bonaventure et de saint Thomas," in: *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 24 (1948), 59-97.

worthwhile to make a study of *extasis* in the *Scriptum*, not only because it is a tantalizing subject in itself, but also because the "mature" Aquinas, far from purging his Aristotelian ethics of Platonic *extasis*, retains and develops his ideas about it all the way to his last writings. I will discuss the significance of this fact in my conclusion.

Thomas's discussions on love are entrusted mostly to four distinctions in Book I and a lengthy sequence in Book III; a few lesser passages from each of the four Books would complete the list⁴. It is not until we are well into Book III that we arrive at what amounts to a treatise on love and charity, Distinctions 27-32⁵. The order of questions and articles within this quasi-treatise is logical enough, although the plan Thomas will conceive for the first part of the *Summa* improves upon it in numerous ways, not least by placing *De amore Dei* where it rightfully belongs, among the divine attributes (qu. 20), following *De voluntate Dei* (qu. 19), rather than tacked on to a consideration of love in creatures, as we find in the *Scriptum*. Broadly outlined, the following topics are taken up in this set of distinctions:

Dist. 27	Definition of love	3 questions, 12 articles
	The definition of <i>amor</i> and <i>caritas</i> ; the love of God commanded by precept	
Dist. 28	Object of charity	7 articles
	Should virtues, animals, angels, bad men, demons, oneself, one's body, be loved from charity?	
Dist. 29	Order of charity	8 articles
	Is the order of things to be loved an order according to affection or effect?; Is God to be loved above all others?; Can charity look to a reward?; Should a man love himself more than his neighbor?; etc.	
Dist. 30	Love of enemies; merit	5 articles
	Is everyone obliged to love, and show signs of love to, his enemies?; Which is of greater merit, to love a friend or an enemy?; Which is of greater merit, to love a neighbor or God?; Does merit consists principally in charity?	

⁴ The distinctions from Book I – viz., d. 10 on the Holy Spirit *ut amor*, d. 17 on *caritas* as a created participation in the divine love, and the first half of d. 32, on the Holy Spirit as the Person by whom Father and Son love themselves and one another – will not form part of my study, since they do not directly relate to my topic.

⁵ This group of distinctions is located at the end of a subsection of Book III on the theological virtues: faith (dd. 23-25), hope (d. 26), charity (dd. 27-32). This subsection has its place after the distinctions on the Incarnation, the *vita Christi*, and related topics (dd. 1-22), and prior to the distinctions on moral and political virtues, gifts of the Spirit, the active and contemplative lives, the old law, etc. (dd. 33-40).

Dist. 31	Miscellaneous queries on charity ⁶	2 questions, 8 articles
	Can charity be lost?; Can any degree of charity resist any temptation?; Will faith or charity be emptied out in the heavenly fatherland?; Will the order of charity remain in heaven?; etc.	
Dist. 32	God's love	5 articles
	Does it belong to God to love a creature?; Does God love all creatures?; Did he so love them from eternity?; Does he love creatures equally?; etc.	

Of these distinctions, the most interesting for us is Distinction 27, with its splendid opening article on the definition of *amor*, wherein the first discussion of *extasis* in Thomas's works is to be found. That he should open his six-distinction treatment of charity with an article inspired by words of Dionysius is in itself revealing. Thomas's principal source on the *extasis amoris* is the *De divinis nominibus*; fittingly, the commentary on that work contains his most elaborate treatment of the subject⁷. When he treats *extasis* in the *Summa theologiae* and in other late works, Dionysius is again prominent. Aquinas never wavers in his acceptance of Dionysius as the foremost authority on *extasis*, the one who is always quoted when the subject turns to the highest reaches of *amor* and *caritas*, the one whose few words on the subject are so apt that they cannot be bettered⁸. The high esteem Thomas has for Dionysian theology in gen-

⁶ I call this distinction miscellaneous, as it would be hard to find a simple heading for it. Thomas has already devoted an earlier distinction, Book I, d. 17, to the nature of charity, where he famously differs with Peter Lombard on the createdness of charity.

⁷ *In librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus* [DDN], ed. Pera, Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1950, cap. 4, lec. 10.

⁸ For simplicity's sake and in deference to tradition, we shall refer to the anonymous fifth-century Syrian writer as Dionysius. Concerning his identity and theological vision, see H. U. VON BALTHASAR, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 2: *Studies in Theological Styles: Clerical Styles*. Trans. A. Louth, F. McDonagh, and B. McNeil. San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1984, 144-210. B. MCGINN discusses how authors in the Platonic tradition came to attribute *eros* and finally *ekstasis* to God: "God as Eros: Metaphysical Foundations of Christian Mysticism," in: B. NASSIF (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*. Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996, 189-209. On the Dionysian coloring of the medieval conception of *extasis*, see D. TURNER, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs*. Kalamazoo, MI, Cistercian Publications, 1995, 47-81. Since Dionysius developed his understanding of *eros* and *ekstasis* out of a Plotinian and Proclean background, Thomas in his reliance upon Dionysius absorbs a vast segment of intellectual history on the topics at hand. In the judgment of one scholar: "Das Fundament der thomistischen Liebeslehre bedeuten die christlich-neuplatonischen Gedankengänge des Pseudo-Dionysius"; "Nur auf Grund des Neuplatonismus aber ist das von Thomas gelehrt Verhältnis von Eigen- und Nächstenliebe ganz zu verstehen." R. EGENTER, *Gottesfreundschaft. Die Lehre der Gottesfreundschaft in der Scholastik und Mystik des 12 und 13 Jahrhunderts*. Augsburg, Filser, 1928, 30 and 32. The standard work on Dionysian *ekstasis* remains that of W. VÖLKER, *Kontemplation und Ekstase bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita*. Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner, 1958. See also R. ROQUES, "Contemplation, extase et ténèbre chez le Pseudo-Denys," in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 2:1885-1911.

eral is conspicuous in his appropriation of the mystic's teachings on the nature of love and its causes and effects, which Thomas integrates with Augustine's teaching on charity and Aristotle's treatment of friendship, placing all these elements at the service of understanding the revelation of love in the Gospels, especially the Gospel of John⁹.

I. The definition of love and its effects (III.27.1.1)

Let us turn, then, to the opening of Distinction 27 of Book III.

In chapter 4 of *On the Divine Names*, Dionysius defines love thus: "Love is a unitive and concreative power [*virtus*], moving superiors to exercise providence for those having less," i.e., their inferiors; "further, moving coordinated things," i.e., equals, "to a communicative relationship with each other; and finally, moving subjects," i.e., inferiors, "to turn themselves toward better things," i.e., their superiors¹⁰.

⁹ F.-M. LÉTHEL puts it nicely: "L'admirable théologie de l'Amour, dans la *Somme théologique*, synthétise l'apport augustinien concernant l'Esprit Saint comme Amour, l'apport dionysien qui transfigure l'*eros* platonicien, en y ajoutant la transfiguration de la *philia* (amitié) aristotélicienne." *Théologie de l'amour de Jésus: Écrits sur la théologie de saints*. Venasque, Éditions du Carmel, 1996, 52. Egenter agrees: "Die Größe seiner Leistung lässt sich gerade daran ermessen, wie gut es ihm in allgemeinen gelang, seine Lehre von der Liebe als eine Synthese neuplatonischer und aristotelischer Lehrstücke zu einem einheitlichen grossen System auszugestalten" (*Gottesfreundschaft*, 34). On the Aristotelian, Augustinian, and monastic background to Thomas's doctrine of friendship, see J. McEvoy, "The Other as Oneself: Friendship and Love in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas," in: J. McEvoy - M. DUNNE (eds.), *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*. Dublin, Four Courts Press, 2002, 16-37. Although Aristotle does not use the term *ekstasis* in his treatment of friendship between the virtuous, he describes what for Thomas constitutes the reality of it: willing and doing good for one's friend, for his sake. Hence *Ethics* 8 and 9, which strongly shaped Thomas's notion of *amicitia*, at the same time furnished him with indications of the ecstatic dimension of friendship. Much recent scholarship defends Aristotle's account of friendship as altruistic or, at very least, non-egoistic. See J. ANNAS, "Plato and Aristotle on Friendship and Altruism," in: *Mind* 86 (1977), 532-554; C. H. KAHN, "Aristotle and Altruism," in: *Mind* 90 (1981), 20-40; A. MADIGAN, "EN IX 8: Beyond Egoism and Altruism?" in: *The Modern Schoolman* 62 (1985), 1-20; G. MANSINI, "Aristotle on Needing Friends," in: *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72 (1998), 405-417. Like David Gallagher (see note 13), Madigan questions the appropriateness of the terms egoism and altruism. A. WOHLMAN has a dissenting reading. For her, Thomas takes up what is in Aristotle an egoistic ethic of friendship and turns it, via charity, into an ethic of genuinely disinterested love. See "L'élaboration des éléments Aristotéliciens dans la doctrine Thomiste de l'amour," in: *Revue Thomiste* 82 (1982), 247-69.

¹⁰ *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, lib. III, dist. 27, qu. 1, art. 1 [=Sent. III.27.1.1], obj. 1: "Ad primum sic proceditur. Dionysius 4 cap. *De div. nom.* sic definit amorem: «Amor virtus est unitiva et concreativa movens superiora ad providentiam minus habentium», idest inferiorum: «coordinata autem», idest aequalia, «rursus ad communicativam alternam habitudinem, subjecta», idest inferiora, «ad meliorum», idest superiorum, «conversionem».» Citations of the *Sentences* are from the MANDONNET-MOOS edition. Paris, Lethielleux, 1929-1947. The text for *Sent.* IV.23 ff. is from R. BUSA (ed.), *Sancti Thomae Aquinatis Opera omnia ut sunt in Indice Thomistico*. Stuttgart, Frommann-Holzboog, 1980.

A host of objections, no fewer than nine, are raised against this definition¹¹. The fourth and lengthiest objection raises a striking set of problems.

Further, in *On the Heavenly Hierarchies* Dionysius sets down "piercing" [*acutum*] and "burning" [*fervidum*] among the properties of love, and "melting," too, is set down as love's effect, as in the Song of Songs: "My soul melted when my beloved spoke" (5:6). In chapter 4 of *On the Divine Names* Dionysius also sets down "ecstasy," i.e., being placed outside oneself, as love's effect. But all these things seem to pertain to division. The piercing is what divides by penetrating; the burning, what dissolves by exhalations. Melting, too, is a kind of division opposed to freezing. And that which is placed outside itself is divided from itself. Therefore love is more a divisive force than a unitive one¹².

A forceful objection – one that brings strongly to the foreground the spiritual violence, the psychic displacement and self-rupturing, which vehement love causes, and to which poets and mystics from all ages and traditions have given expression in language that, with its rapturous turns and halting steps, reflects the very qualities of the love it tries to convey.

To appreciate Thomas's reply, we must first read through the extraordinarily rich body of the article, which addresses what love is, what love does or causes to be done, and why, accordingly, the Dionysian definition proves "most complete."

It should be said that love pertains to appetite. Appetite, however, is a passive power. Whence in *On the Soul* 3 the Philosopher says that the appetible good moves as an unmoved mover, whereas appetite moves as a moved mover. Now, every passive principle is brought to perfection insofar as it is formed by the form of its corresponding active principle, and in this its motion reaches its term and it comes to a rest. We see this in the case of intellect: before it is formed by an intelligible form, it inquires and doubts, but as soon as it is so informed, its inquiry ceases and the intellect fastens upon that, and then the intellect is said to adhere

¹¹ For the objections, cf. Moos ed., 853-54, §11; for the response, 854-56, §12-§17; for the replies to the objections, 856-58, §18-§32.

¹² "Dionysius 7 cap. *Cael. hierar.*, inter proprietates amoris ponit acutum et fervidum; et etiam liquefactio amoris effectus ponitur. *Cant.* 5, 6: «Anima mea liquefacta est, ut dilectus locutus est.» Dionysius etiam, 4 cap. *De div. nom.*, ponit effectum amoris extasim, idest extra se positionem. Haec autem omnia ad divisionem pertinere videntur, quia acuti est penetrando dividere, fervidi vero per exhalationem resolvi; liquefactio etiam divisio quaedam, est congelationi opposita; quod est etiam extra se positum, a seipso dividitur. Ergo amor magis est vis divisiva quam unitiva."

firmly to that thing. Similarly, when the affection or appetite is wholly imbued by the form of a good that is an object for it, it finds the good suitable¹³, and adheres to it as though fixed upon it; and then it is said to love it. Whence love is nothing other than a certain transformation¹⁴ of affection into the thing loved¹⁵. And since anything that is made the form of something is made one with it, through love the lover becomes one with what is loved, which becomes the lover's form. And therefore the Philosopher says in *Ethics* 9 that "a friend is another self"; and we read in 1 Cor. 6:17: "Whoever adheres to God is one spirit"¹⁶.

Now, each thing acts according to the demands and needs¹⁷ of its form, which is the principle of acting and the rule of work. But the good loved is the end, and the end is the starting-point in matters of action, as first principles are the starting-point in matters of knowledge. Whence, just as the intellect, once it is informed by the essences of things, is directed thereby in its knowledge of the principles, which principles become known once the terms are known, and is directed further to the knowledge of conclu-

¹³ The phrase here is impossible to translate literally: *complacet sibi in illo*. Thomas is not saying that the affection or appetite "is pleased by" or "takes delight in" the good, for that would be *delectatio* or *gaudium*; one must think rather of *complacentia* in the philosophical sense Thomas develops for it, namely, a taking of the object to be well suited to oneself, experiencing the object as proportionate or fitted to oneself. After this initial stage, *out of* the basic adaptation of appetite to appetible, follow other acts of appetite such as desire for an absent good and delight in a present good. On the place of *complacentia* in Thomas's *doctrina amoris*, see F. E. CROWE, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," in: *Theological Studies* 20 (1959), 1-39, 198-230, 343-95; D. GALLAGHER, "Desire for Beatitude and Love of Friendship in Thomas Aquinas," in: *Mediaeval Studies* 58 (1996), 1-47.

¹⁴ Thomas uses the word *transformatio* with exactness, for he has just analyzed the manner in which a passive power is shaped, determined, by a form received into it; thus any process in which something unformed becomes formed can be conceived of as the passing over of a form *into* a subject as yet unformed, with the result that the formed can be said to be *transformed* into the agent of this process – gaining in some way the agent's own form.

¹⁵ *rem amatum*. Notice that Thomas is approaching the subject from a general and objective standpoint; he speaks here of a "thing loved," which could be, in principle, *any* object of love, personal or impersonal. Quite soon in the response, however, his ideas indicate that he has shifted to the domain of personal love. For this reason, it would arguably be misleading not to acknowledge the implicit shift to the personal. This I have done by translating *amatum* later in the response as "beloved," though the word's romantic connotations in modern English need not, and at times should not, be imported. It is not irrelevant to note, moreover, that the noun *amatum*, which is unambiguously neuter in the nominative case, more often appears in this passage in oblique cases, where neuter and masculine genders are identical (*amati, amatum, amato*).

¹⁶ Usually rendered "one spirit *with him*," though St. Paul simply writes "one spirit."

¹⁷ The many connotations of *exigentia* should be borne in mind: exigency, necessity, neediness, demands, requirements. I owe the paraphrase "demands and needs" to Christopher Malloy.

sions which come to be known from the principles, so too, the lover whose affection is informed by the good itself – which has the nature of an end, though not always of the last end – is inclined through love to acting according to the demands and needs of the beloved, and such activity is most of all delightful to him, as being suitable to his form. For this reason, whatsoever the lover does or suffers for the beloved, the whole of it is delightful to him, and he is ever more stirred up¹⁸, in so far as he experiences greater delight in the beloved in all he does or suffers for his sake. And just as fire cannot be restrained, except by violence, from the motion which agrees with it according to the requirements of its form, so neither can the lover be restrained from acting according to love; and on account of this, Gregory says: love "cannot be lazy, but rather, if it exists at all, it accomplishes great things." And since "every violent thing is saddening, as if repugnant to the will," as is said in *Metaphysics* 5, it is therefore painful to work against love's inclination, or even to disregard it¹⁹, whereas to work according to it is to accomplish those things which are appropriate to the beloved. For since the lover takes up the beloved as though he were the same as himself, he must, as it were, wear the mask of the beloved²⁰ in all that looks toward the beloved. And so, in a way, the lover serves²¹ the beloved in so far as he is guided by the beloved's ends²².

Accordingly, Dionysius, in the passage cited above, furnishes a most complete definition of love. For where he says that "love is a unitive and concretive power," he sets down the very union between lover and beloved, which comes about through the transformation of the lover's affection into the beloved; and where he says "moving superior things," etc., he sets down love's inclination to accomplish those things that look toward the beloved,

¹⁸ A phrase that could also be rendered: "he is ever more set on fire, aroused."

¹⁹ *etiam praeter eam* – literally, to work beyond or beside love's inclination.

²⁰ *oportet ut quasi personam amati amans gerat in omnibus quae ad amatum spectant*. The idiom *gerit ... personam* can mean both "wear a mask" and "perform the role of x." Taking it in the latter sense, Thomas would be saying that the lover, by identifying himself with the beloved, performs the beloved's role, i.e., he loves the beloved as the beloved loves himself in all the things he does or wishes to do.

²¹ *inservit*, which can also have the sense of "take care of," "look after," "be devoted to."

²² This is my attempt to get at the expression *amati terminis regulatur*, which could also mean "the beloved's goals are his rule" or "he is governed on the beloved's terms."

whether the beloved be a superior, an inferior, or an equal²³.

In light of this rich teaching on love put forward in the body of the article, how does Thomas respond to the fourth objection? As usual, he does not dismiss the objection as simply false; he affirms the truth it contains by making a distinction. The requisite clarification enables him to affirm the objection's content down to the last detail by showing how its truth in one way presupposes, and in another way follows upon, the proposed definition of love as a *vis unitiva*²⁴. The various properties spoken of are not the essence of love but are rather to be considered the processes of division – more precisely, a simultaneous threefold dividing – of self that necessarily accompanies the fundamental process of unification which takes place between those

²³ "Dicendum quod amor ad appetitum pertinet. Appetitus autem est virtus passiva. Unde in III *De anima*, dicit Philosophus quod appetibile movet sicut movens non motum, appetitus autem sicut movens motum. Omne autem passivum perficitur secundum quod formatur per formam sui activi et in hoc motu ejus terminatur et quiescit. Sicut intellectus, antequam formetur per formam intelligibilis, inquit et dubitat: qua cum informatus fuerit, inquisitio cessat, et intellectus in illo figitur; tunc et dicitur intellectus firmiter illi rei inhaerere. Similiter quando affectus vel appetitus omnino imbuitur forma boni quod est sibi objectum, complacet sibi in illo et adhaeret ei quasi fixum in ipso; et tunc dicitur amare ipsum. Unde amor nihil aliud est quam quaedam transformatio affectus in rem amatam.

Et quia omne quod efficitur forma alicujus, efficitur unum cum illo; ideo per amorem amans fit unum cum amato, quod est factum forma amantis. Et ideo dicit Philosophus in IX *Eth.*, quod «amicus est alter ipse»; et 1 Cor. 6, 17: «Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est.»

Unumquodque autem agit secundum exigentiam suae formae quae est principium agendi et regula operis. Bonum autem amatum est finis. Finis autem est principium in operabilibus sicut principia prima in cognoscendis. Unde sicut intellectus formatus per quidditates rerum ex hoc dirigitur in cognitione principiorum quae scitis terminis cognoscuntur, et ulterius in cognitionibus conclusionum quae notae fiunt ex principiis; ita amans, cujus affectus est informatus ipso bono quod habet rationem finis, quamvis non semper ultimi, inclinatur per amorem ad operandum secundum exigentiam amati. Et talis operatio est sibi maxime delectabilis, quasi formae suae conveniens.

Unde amans quicquid facit vel patitur pro amato, totum est sibi delectabile et semper magis accenditur in amatum in quantum majorem delectationem in amato experitur in his quae propter ipsum facit vel patitur. Et sicut ignis non potest retineri a motu qui competit sibi secundum exigentiam suae formae, nisi per violentiam; ita nec amans quin agat secundum amorem. Et propter hoc dicit Gregorius quod «non potest esse otiosus, immo magna operatur, si est.»

Et quia «omne violentum est tristabile, quasi voluntati repugnans», ut dicitur V *Meta.*, ideo etiam, est poenosum contra inclinationem amoris operari vel etiam praeter eam; operari autem secundum eam est operari ea quae amato competunt. Cum enim amans amatum assumpsit quasi idem sibi, oportet ut quasi personam amati amans gerat in omnibus quae ad amatum spectant; et sic quodammodo amans amato inservit, in quantum amati terminis regulatur.

Sic ergo Dionysius completissime amoris rationem in praedicta assignatione ponit. Ponit enim ipsam unionem amantis ad amatum quae est facta per transformationem affectus amantis in amatum, in hoc quod dicit amorem esse unitivam et concretivam virtutem. Et ponit inclinationem ipsius amoris ad operandum ea quae ad amatum spectant, sive sit superius, sive inferius, sive aequale, in hoc quod dicit: «movens superiora, etc.»

²⁴ "Le sens global de la réfutation [of the fourth objection] est donc d'affirmer que toutes les autres définitions dionysiennes de l'amour, tous les symboles, ne se peuvent comprendre que comme préalables où comme conséquences de la définition par l'union" (R. DE WEISS, «*Amor sui*»: *Sens et fonctions de l'amour de soi dans l'ontologie de Thomas d'Aquin*. Geneva, Imprimerie du Belvédère, 1977, 82).

who are loving each other and without which the desired communion of lover and beloved cannot come into being or flourish.

To the fourth, it should be said that in love there is a union of lover and beloved, but there is also a threefold division.

[*First division.*] For by the fact that love transforms the lover into the beloved, it makes the lover enter into the interior of the beloved and *vice versa*, so that nothing of the beloved remains not united to the lover²⁵, just as a form reaches to the innermost recesses of that which it informs and *vice versa*²⁶. Thus, the lover in a way penetrates into the beloved, and so love is called "piercing"; for to come into the innermost recesses of a thing by dividing it is characteristic of something piercing. In the same way does the beloved penetrate the lover, reaching to his innermost recesses, and that is why it is said that love "wounds," and that it "transfixes the innards"²⁷.

²⁵ Here, as elsewhere, Thomas beautifully constructs his sentence to reflect the doctrine he expounds: "ut nichil *amati amanti* remaneat non unitum." Grammatically lover and beloved come as close together as possible, nothing stands between them. Other examples include, from the response, a threefold pattern which again echoes its content: "Cum enim *amans amatum* assumpsit quasi idem sibi, oportet ut quasi personam *amati amans* gerat in omnibus quae ad amatum spectant. Et sic quodammodo *amans amato* inseruit in quantum amati terminis regulatur."

²⁶ An example of this last point would be the relationship between soul and body according to Thomas's understanding: the numerically single soul "comes to the innermost" of the body, being wholly present, simultaneously, to each and every part, giving rise to each and every power (cf. *Summa theologiae* [STh] I.76, esp. art. 8); but it is also true to say, perhaps even truer, that the living body is present to the soul and even "contained" by it (cf. STh II-II.183.2 ad 2; *Super ad Eph.* 1, lec. 8: "Quaerenti enim cur in corpore naturali sint tot membra, scilicet manus, pedes, os et huiusmodi, respondetur hoc esse ideo ut deserviant diversis operibus animae, quorum ipsa potest esse causa, principium, et quae sunt virtute in ipsa. Nam corpus est factum propter animam, et non e converso. Unde secundum hoc corpus naturale est quaedam plenitudo animae. Nisi enim essent membra cum corpore completa, non posset anima suas operationes plene exercere"). In this way the formed is present in or to the innermost of the form.

²⁷ *transfigit jecur*. In medieval physiology the liver (*iecur* or *jecur*) was regarded as the origin of blood, and sometimes as the seat of the passions. The term itself, anatomical in its first imposition, signifies an organ or part of the body with many properties – the hidden innards, the seat of vital fire, the 'domicile of life', the source of nourishment, the origin of veins and of blood, and so forth. We can assume that Thomas was aware of some, if not all, of these properties; this adds subtle shades of meaning to the statement he makes here. See G. FORCELLINI, *Totius Latinitatis Lexicon*, s.v. 'iecur'. Prati, Alberguettus, 1865, 3:353-54. The entry reads: "nomen visceris maximi in animalibus latentis originis ... proprie est viscus animalium maximum in dextra parte sub praecordiis situm," and quotes Isidore of Seville: "nomen habet eo quod ignis ibi habeat sedem," and Cicero: "cerebrum, cor, pulmones, iecur: haec enim sunt domicilia vitae." It would seem to make little difference for the point Thomas is making whether one identifies the liver, the heart, or the innards (*viscera*), as the seat of the passions, inasmuch as physiology gave these organs or this region the same functions. Thomas holds that blood is generated in the liver and that the heart is the *instrumentum passionum animae* (STh I-II.48.2 corp.; ad 1); the heart is also at the center of the blood system (*Sent.*

[*Second division.*] But because nothing can be transformed into another without withdrawing, in a way, from its own form, since of a single thing there is a single form, therefore preceding this division of penetration is another division by which the lover, in tending toward the beloved, is separated from himself. And according to this, love is said to bring about ecstasy and to burn²⁸, since that which burns rises beyond itself and vanishes into smoke²⁹.

[*Third division.*] Further still, because nothing withdraws from itself unless freed from what was containing it within itself, as a natural thing does not lose its form unless the dispositions retaining this form in the matter are unbound, it is therefore necessary that that boundedness by which the lover was contained within his own bounds be taken away from him. And that is why love is said to "melt the heart," for a liquid is not contained by its own limits, while the contrary disposition is called "hardness of heart"³⁰.

By this response, Thomas seeks to underline as strongly as possible the manner in which love really *transforms* the lover – how, in words inspired by Dionysius, it pierces him, wounds him, sets him aflame, places him out of himself, frees him from

IV.11.3.4.3, expositio textus: "per sanguinem in corde generatum vitalis operatio in omnia membra diffunditur" [Moos, 489, §325]. In the Prologue of *Super Ieremiam* (Busa 5:96b), he states that *viscera* and *iecur* symbolize the *compassionis pietas* of a true prophet; cf. *Super Threnos 2* (Busa 5:124c, §11).

²⁸ The word *extasis* is being employed here in its strictly etymological sense: *ek-stasis*, a standing outside oneself. The phrase *dicitur amor extasim facere et fervere* implies not that love is said to do this "on its own," but rather that love does this to, or in, the lover, as if to say: "love causes one to be in ecstasy and makes one burn."

²⁹ *quod fervet extra se ebullit et exhalat*, which could also be rendered "that which seethes, boils out of itself and evaporates" or "that which burns, rises outside itself into exhalations." I will come back to imagery of smoke and flame below.

³⁰ "Ad quantum dicendum quod in amore est unio amantis ad amatum, sed est ibi triplex divisio. Ex hoc enim quod amor transformat amantem in amatum, facit amantem intrare ad interiora amati et e converso, ut nihil amati remaneat non unitum; sicut forma pervenit ad intima formati et e converso. Et ideo amans quodammodo penetrat in amatum, et secundum hoc amor dicitur acutus. Acuti enim est dividendo ad intima rei devenire. Et similiter amatum penetrat amantem ad interiora ejus perveniens. Et propter hoc dicitur quod amor vulnerat, et quod transfigit jecur. Sed quia nihil potest in alterum transformari nisi secundum quod a sua forma quodammodo recedit, quia unius una est forma, ideo hanc divisionem penetrationis praecedit alia divisio qua amans a seipso separatur in amatum tendens. Et secundum hoc dicitur amor extasim facere et fervere, quia quod fervet extra se ebullit et exhalat. Quia vero nihil a se recedit nisi soluto eo quod intra seipsum continebatur, sicut res naturalis non amittit formam nisi solutis dispositionibus quibus forma in materia retinebatur, ideo oportet quod ab amante terminatio illa qua infra terminos suos tantum continebatur, amoveatur. Et propter hoc amor dicitur liquefacere cor, quia liquidum suis terminis non continetur; et contraria dispositio dicitur cordis duritia."

limits, melts him; how it *divides* the lover from himself in order to make his union with the beloved all the more perfect, in order to make him a perfect lover, centered on the beloved and living with and for the other rather than turned in upon himself and living for himself alone. In fact, the response furnishes an exact description of what is meant when we say that love causes *ekstasis*, that it makes one stand outside of oneself. It is as though Thomas were here presenting what may be called the *via negativa* of love³¹. There is the positive side of the definition, which looks to what love aims at, what it brings about: love is a unitive force making possible the communion of lover and beloved. But even as the notion of "first efficient cause" or "source of all perfections" implies the negation of passive potency or imperfection, so too, there are negative aspects implied in the definition of love. Love not only builds up the union, it destroys whatever is incompatible with it; love not only sees to it that friends are rooted in the common good, it uproots them from whatever private goods may stand in the way of communion. In order to unite, love also divides; it divides a man from himself so that he can give himself as a gift.

One can gauge the significance this response by considering for a moment a view popularized by Pierre Rousselot in his study *The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages*³². In fleshing out his contrast between the eudaemonistic "physical" account of love identified as Aristotelian-Thomistic and the violent "ecstatic" account attributed to certain medieval mystics, Rousselot failed to consider passages which show Thomas to be aware of *both* aspects present in human love, the unitive and the divisive, the perfective and the "violent" – aspects so connected that the exclusion of either would lead, in theory and in practice, to the distortion and destruction of the other³³. What

³¹ As C. E. ROLT says: "The *Via Negativa*, for those who can scale its dizzy ascent, is after all but a higher altitude of that same royal road which, where it traverses more populous regions, we all recognize as the one true Pilgrim's Way. For it seeks to attain its goal through self-renunciation. And where else are the true principles of such a process to be found if it be not in the familiar virtues of Christian humility and Christian love?" (Introduction to *Dionysius the Areopagite: The Divine Names and the Mystical Theology*. London, SPCK, 1920, 47). The stripping away of inadequate human conceptions is itself a form of *extasis* by which the believing mind, led by grace to a deeper union with the primal Love, rises beyond itself, going out of its limited ideas and standing in the realm of the unlimited. Since this realm is not our realm, the *extasis* of faith is experienced as darkness.

³² The title given by its translator (A. Vincerlette); Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, n.d. The original is *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au moyen âge*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, 6.6. Münster, Aschendorffsche Buchhandlung, 1908. For an accurate summary of Rousselot and of many subsequent works addressing his position, see T. M. DEFERRARI, *The Problem of Charity for Self: A Study of Thomistic and Modern Theological Discussion*. Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1963; G. STEVENS, "The Disinterested Love of God According to St. Thomas and Some of His Modern Interpreters," in: *The Thomist* 16 (1953), 308-25; GALLAGHER, "Desire for Beatitude"; C. MALLOY, "Love of God for His Own Sake and Love of Beatitude: Heavenly Charity According to Thomas Aquinas," Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 2001, 20-82.

³³ While *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4 is a clear example of a text with a strong tincture of what Rousselot regards as "ecstatic," it does not stand alone; the same line of thought is found in one of Thomas's final

Rousselot sees as exclusive alternatives, a natural model of self-perfection and an ecstatic model of self-oblation, are seen by Thomas as co-present in *amor amicitiae*, not merely side-by-side or taking turns but contained *within* each other, implicated *by* each other. Should not Rousselot's sharp contrast between physical and ecstatic be confronted with the question: Does Aquinas have anything to say about the ecstatic aspect of love? Is he aware of a process of self-rending or self-renouncing similar to that which the proponents of ecstaticism describe, and if so, how does he differ from them?³⁴ It is not sufficient to insinuate, as Rousselot does in the single comment he makes on Thomistic ecstasy, that the Angelic Doctor connects the word *extasis* with God but then promptly cancels it out with a *quodammodo*³⁵. For without a doubt, in comparison with the divine *esse* the entire created universe exists only *quodammodo*; it is a cosmic *secundum quid*. And if this is true, can we assume that it is cancelled out, that it has no proper reality? One might take it rather as irresistible incentive for a doctrine of analogy – and for silent wonder.

Let us take a closer look at the position in *Sentences* III.27.1.1 ad 4. The union of lover and beloved which is of the essence of love demands at the same time a three-fold division presented as deriving from the very notion of union, viz., that two things are made to be one, and therefore that each is somehow *transformed* into the other. What are the steps and why are they necessary?

First division. If the union is really taking place, the lover must have entered into and must be continually entering into the interior of the beloved, and vice versa, so that nothing remains disunited, just as a thing's form is innermost in it and

works, the *De perfectione spiritualis vitae*, ch. 11. Is it not surpassingly strange that throughout Rousselot's study – based on the contrast between "physical" and "ecstatic" conceptions of love – we find Thomas, hailed as partisan of the former and arch-enemy of the latter, quoted but once, and that in passing, on the topic of ecstasy, while the other 83 occurrences of the word *extasis* in the works of Aquinas are passed over as if they did not exist? Nor is it less odd that Rousselot, while citing (again in passing) *STh* I-II.28.5 on the wounding of love, never cites its companion articles – 28.2 on *mutua inhaesio*, 28.3 on *extasis*, or 28.4 on *zelus*. Rousselot marginalizes a strand of discourse in Thomas, not as prominent as the one he emphasizes but for that reason more in danger of a neglect that invites distortion. One could put it this way: Rousselot's study gives ecstasy a bad name. In Thomas's writings, however, it has a good name, for it names a perfection of love.

³⁴ I find it similarly puzzling that L.-B. GEIGER, who opposed to Rousselot's physicalism a modified ecstaticism, failed to highlight the positive role of *extasis* in Aquinas, although it would have added lustre to his argument. The word 'ecstatic' is used by Geiger several times but no texts from Thomas are cited: *Le problème de l'amour chez saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Montreal, Institut d'Études Médiévales/Paris, J. Vrin, 1952.

³⁵ For McGinn, too, Thomas's addition of the qualifying *quodammodo* to Dionysius's assertion of God's ecstasy in effect cancels out the realism with which the Areopagite intends to speak, and makes Aquinas's application of *extasis* to God purely a literary device ("God as Eros," 201-209). I disagree with McGinn's interpretation of the intentions of both Dionysius and Thomas, but this is not the place to lay out my arguments.

encompasses all of it, leaving nothing unformed. The implications of this analogy to natural form and matter should not be passed over, and Thomas seems determined that we should not, for he repeats it very often. Consider the fifth objection, which asserts that the addition of "concretive" to "unitive" in the definition is superfluous given that every concretion is already a union³⁶. Thomas takes the objection as an opportunity to emphasize a point he has already made. The union of love takes place in the depths of the things united; it is not a mere coming into contact of two bodies or, in more modern terms, a joining of two parties by a contract which takes into its purview no more than external possessions. Love brings about a real conversion and transformation of the lover, and it is for this reason that Dionysius adds *concretiva*, as if stating the specific difference that divides off the union called *amor* from any other sort of togetherness there might be.

It should be said that union is twofold. For a certain kind of union unifies in a qualified sense, like the union of things brought together by surfaces touching; and such is not the union of love, since, as was said, the lover is transformed into the beloved's interior. There is another union that unifies simply speaking, like the union of continuous things and of form and matter; and such is the union of love, since love makes the beloved the lover's form. Thus, in addition to "union" Dionysius adds "concretion," in order to differentiate it from the first union, since those things are called "thoroughly mingled" [*concreta*] which are made to be simply one. Accordingly, another version gives "continuative"³⁷.

As Thomas recognizes, "union" can be taken in a weak sense, where it signifies no more than two things being brought together or associated in any way (for example, two surfaces touching), or a strong sense, where it signifies two things being made one simply. Having distinguished these senses, Thomas argues that the *unio amoris* is not a union of superficial contact but a "carrying-over of the lover into the interior of the beloved," which makes the two *formally one* in the affective order. Indeed, he

³⁶ "Praeterea, omnis concretio est quaedam unio. Ergo superfluum fuit utrumque ponere in definitione amoris unitivum et concretivum" (Moos, 854, §11).

³⁷ I.e., making the two continuous with one another. The *alia littera* is that of John Scotus Eriugena (Moos, 858, n. 4). *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 5 (Moos, 858, §28): "Ad quintum dicendum quod unio est duplex. Quaedam quae facit unum secundum quid, sicut unio congregatorum se superficialiter tangentium; et talis non est unio amoris, cum amans in interiora amati transformatur, ut dictum est. Alia est unio quae facit unum simpliciter, sicut unio continuorum et formae et materiae; et talis est unio amoris, quia amor facit amatum esse formam amantis; et ideo supra unionem addidit concretionem ad differentiam primae unionis, quia concreta dicuntur quae simpliciter unum sunt effecta; unde et alia littera habet continuativa."

dares to say that *concretio* is added to the definition because it brings out the note of a plurality "made to be simply one," *simpliciter unum*³⁸.

Now, both from the fact that he is speaking of union in the *ordo appetitus* or *ordo affectus* and from his way of inserting, most of the time, a qualifying term (*quodammodo, quasi*), we can see that he does not mean ontologically one, as though co-subjects merge to form one substance. The prefix *con-* in *concretio* suggests the abiding of the many in the one rather than the abolition of elements in a pure unity. However, his insistence on the *simpliciter unum* conveyed by *concretio* indicates that he wants the *unio amoris* to be understood, at its proper psycho-spiritual level, as robustly and literally as possible³⁹. The point is reiterated two articles later in a passage that lays out the difference between the joining of thing to thing and the joining of appetite to appetible.

Similarly, love is more vehement [than pleasure], since it comes about through the informing of the appetite by something appetible, whereas pleasure comes about when a thing is joined to something suitable for it and near at hand. But the joining of thing to thing is not the same as the joining of appetite to appetible. The thing that causes pleasure upon its arrival is not joined [to the one pleased by it] according to nature, for *this* does not become *that*. Hence, in this case there is a joining in the manner of contact. Appetite, in contrast, is of and toward the appetible itself, according to its nature and substance. Hence, when an appetite is informed by something appetible, it is a joining in the manner of continuity and concretion. For this reason love unites more than pleasure does, since it makes the lover to *be*, in his affection, the very one loved, whereas pleasure comes

³⁸ Thomas might well have seen a passage in Albert's commentary on the *Sentences* in which his teacher contrasts the mere seeing of something with cleaving to it, and lays out the kinds of touching, from most superficial to most intimate (*Sent.* I.1.B.12 ad 1, ed. Borgnet, 35:29-30, quoted in ROUSSELOT, *Problem of Love* [Engl. ed.], 206-207). There are strong verbal resonances between Albert's text and certain lines in Thomas's *Scriptum*, Book I, d. 27.

³⁹ Speaking of a text we will quote presently, *Sent.* III.27.1.3 ad 2 ("amor ... facit quod amans sit secundum affectum *ipsa res amata*"), M. J. FARAON lays emphasis on the realism of the union: "By reason of this affective union with the object, the lover actually is transformed into the object itself. ... This is neither a union of essences nor a union by way of representation; it is a union of the affections of lover and beloved (*Sent.* III. 29.1.3 ad 1: 'amor non est unio ipsarum rerum essentialiter, sed affectuum'). Subject and object retain their distinction while retaining their identity. Yet, they become one by reason of the mutual modification of their wills, one by the other, inclining the one to the other (*Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4: 'facit amantem intrare ad interiora amati ut nihil remaneat non unum'). It is the object itself, with all the content of its individual reality, which is present in the lover modifying the lover by way of inclination" (*The Metaphysical and Psychological Principles of Love*. Dubuque, IA, William C. Brown, 1952, 47).

about when the lover shares in something that belongs to the loved, in so far as the one loved is really present.

Yet it should be understood that when the one loved is really present, in the manner in which this is possible, pleasure then occurs, as from the joining of what is most of all fitting [to the lover]. When, on the other hand, the one loved is altogether absent in reality, then the lover is most of all afflicted by the one loved⁴⁰, even as pain may accompany the cutting apart of something continuous, for love is a force that makes for continuity, as was said; and this is why it is said that "love makes one grow faint and waste away"⁴¹. But when the one loved is in one respect present and in another respect absent, the lover experiences pleasure mingled with affliction⁴².

According to III.27.1.1, the lover and beloved *form each other*, they become, in a certain sense, each other's forms, so that it is not possible for one of them to say "I am myself" without including that "the other is part of myself and I am part of him"⁴³. The lover coming into the beloved's interior divides the beloved from himself, for the lover now is at home there, has opened up a place in the other's soul, and for this reason love is said to be piercing, it makes its way into the deepest recesses of the person. The beloved in like manner penetrates the lover; hence love is said to wound and transfix the one who loves, for in loving, he does not remain unchanged while he

⁴⁰ Thomas writes: *tunc maxime affligit*, the one loved most of all afflicts the lover.

⁴¹ A poetic rendering of *amor languere facit*, love causes languor, illness, weakness.

⁴² *Sent.* III.27.1.3 ad 2 (Moos, 865-66, §62-§63): "Similiter etiam vehementior [est amor quam delectatio]; quia amor est per informationem appetitus ab appetibili, delectatio autem per conjunctionem rei ex re praesente sibi conveniente. Non est autem tanta conjunctio rei ad rem quanta conjunctio appetitus ad appetibile; quia res adveniens quae delectationem causat, non conjungitur secundum naturam, quia hoc non fit illud; unde est ibi quasi conjunctio contactus, sed appetitus est ipsius appetibilis secundum suam naturam et substantiam. Unde quando appetitus informatur per appetibile, est quasi conjunctio continuitatis et concretionis. Unde amor plus unit quam delectatio, quia facit quod amans sit secundum affectum ipsa res amata; delectatio autem est per participationem alicujus ab illo, secundum quod est realiter praesens. Sciendum autem quod quando amatum est praesens realiter, secundum quod possibile est, tunc est delectatio, sicut ex conjunctione maxime convenientis. Quando autem est omnino absens secundum rem, tunc maxime affligit; sicut ex divisione continui sequitur dolor, quia amor est continuativa vis, ut dictum est; et inde dicitur, quod amor languere facit. Quando autem est secundum aliquid praesens et secundum aliquid absens, tunc habet delectationem admixtam afflictioni."

⁴³ "Form" is understood in this context to mean self or intimate identity, the "who" or "I" of the person, and every perfection that goes to make up this self. The *transformatio* Thomas is speaking of is a relationship in which, on the one hand, the beloved person is received, in a spiritual mode, into the heart of the lover as a center of intention and goal of striving, and on the other hand, the lover goes out of himself by serving the beloved unselfishly. All of these points become much clearer in the commentary on Dionysius's *On the Divine Names*, where Thomas will explain *extasis* against the backdrop of *amor amicitiae* and *amor concupiscentiae*. See DDN 4.9, §§404-5; 4.10, §§428-29.

changes another, but is pierced as much as he pierces. There is no giving without receiving, and no receiving without giving. If love is returned – and that is the scenario Thomas has in mind, as his words make plain; we are not speaking here of a solitary wanderer wishing for a companion, much less of the all-sufficient God who cannot be taken out of himself or perfected by what another gives to him – then the gift of oneself is already a reception of the gift of the other to whom the gift is given. One could put it this way: the more the self is given through acts of love done for the other's sake, the more the giver himself is transformed into the object of the gift, the more he is conformed to the other, and the other, reciprocating, to him⁴⁴. The union is perfected only because each of the lovers is *open* to being pierced and wounded. If there were no piercing and wounding of the ego, there could be no enlarging and transforming of the ego.

Gabriel Marcel observes that the problem of the one and the many has been given so much attention that other engaging problems are lost sight of, such as the contrast between the full and the empty, understood as psychic or spiritual categories⁴⁵. One might say, in a similar vein, that the contrast between “open” and “closed” – the man who is open to giving of himself and receiving into himself versus the man who closes himself off from others, the “open heart” and the “closed heart” – is fundamental in Thomas's ethical vision⁴⁶. Closure of the self would mean imprisonment in the self, the negation of the possibility of union with its power to purify through suffering and to perfect through virtue. Of course, one might make a reply to Marcel by pointing out that the problem of the full and the empty, or the open and the closed, are closely related to the problem of the one and the many, so much so that

⁴⁴ But of course I do not mean (nor could Thomas have meant) by this progressive transformation a sort of grand egoism in which the world, by one's gift-giving efforts, is slowly changed into a projection of oneself, though there have never been wanting cynics who would try to reduce all transactions to self-interest. In fact, it is exactly the contrary: the process of conformity to the other is a process of simultaneous self-expansion and self-differentiation. That is, what counts as one's “self” becomes enlarged so that the contours of its reality are no longer limited to the private self; love entails a sort of distintegration of private identity. And thus the more one gives of oneself in love, the more differentiated one's identity is. One actually *identifies with* others: their wishes and goals, sufferings and joys, spiritual and physical conditions, become not just things one can observe, imagine, entertain, validate, etc., but things one *undergoes as one's own*, indeed, they *are* one's own: he who harms a person deeply loved, at the same stroke deeply harms the lover. See GALLAGHER, “Desire for Beatitude”; idem, “Thomas Aquinas on Self-Love as the Basis for Love of Others,” in: *Acta Philosophica* 8 (1999), 23-44.

⁴⁵ See “On the Ontological Mystery,” in: G. MARCEL, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*. Trans. M. Harari, New York, Philosophical Library, 1984, 12. Cf. entry for 17 October 1919 in G. MARCEL, *Metaphysical Journal*. Trans. B. Wall, Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1952, 206.

⁴⁶ In many texts Aquinas mingles related images of the contrary dispositions of the human heart, such as hard or melted, stony or fleshy, closed or open, cold or warm, deep or shallow. See, e.g., *ST I-II.28.5*, reply to objections; *Super Matt.* 13, lec. 1, §1089 (Marietti, 171-2); *Super I Cor.* 13, lec. 2, §773 (Marietti 1:382); *Super Ps.* 21, §11 (Busa 6:77b); *Super Ps.* 51, §2 (Busa 6:127a).

they are derivable from it, as in Parmenides' proof of the fullness of Being and its incapacity for change on the grounds of its unity⁴⁷.

In Thomas's discussions of *amor* and *caritas*, the language of wounding, piercing, transfixing, is to be understood metaphorically unless the context shows that the bodily is also included, as when he is treating of the Savior's sufferings, of martyrdom, or of the overflowing into the body of the soul's inner disposition. The “wounding of love,” where “wound” is taken not literally and negatively as an injury, but metaphorically and positively as the result of an intense love that pieces the lover's heart and tears him from himself, has a rich history in mystical writings, particularly in the Song of Songs commentary tradition. Thomas is extremely hesitant about using the words *vulneratio*, *laesio*, and *languor* in a positive sense – the majority of occurrences have a dismal negativity – but it is obvious that he is willing to *describe*, in parallel terms, the wounding and languishment caused by love⁴⁸. Thus we find him declaring that love is sharp and cutting, like a sword, it burns like fire and causes one to burn, it pierces the liver, penetrates into the heart, and so on. In short, we are given a very full description of the *blessures d'amour*, but one must pay attention to the language that is deemed adaptable for the purpose, and the language that is generally ruled out. Certain words have almost exclusively evil associations, while others are more neutral, their face smiling or frowning as context demands. “Wound” is connected with sin, concupiscence, sickness, warfare, death, whereas in the spiritual realm, “burning” and “piercing” are good and perfective *at least* as often as, and probably more often than, they are the contrary⁴⁹.

It would not be irrelevant to ask to what extent this kind of language has its basis in, and carries overtones of, the act of sexual union, in which piercing or penetration, and initially a wounding, are involved⁵⁰. To a conventional Freudian, the connection

⁴⁷ While critical of aspects of his position, H.-D. SIMONIN praises Rousselot for “bringing back the problem of love to that of the one and the many” (“Autour de la solution thomiste du problème de l'amour,” in: *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge* 6 [1931], 261 n. 2). E. ROLLAND declares: “Au point de vue surnaturel comme au simple point de vue naturel, tout le problème de la réalisation humaine est un problème d'unité. Adhaerere Deo: adhérer à Dieu par l'intelligence, adhérer à Dieu par la volonté” (“L'unification par l'amour,” in: *Revue Apologétique* 56 [1933], 389).

⁴⁸ See also *STh I-II.28.5*, *utrum amor sit passio laesiva amantis*.

⁴⁹ Thomas's handling of the theme of love's wounds as well as other motifs from the Song of Songs deserves closer attention than it has received. On the language of wounding in authors prior to Thomas, see ROUSSELOT, *Problem of Love* [Engl. ed.], 169-77. Alongside the language of wounding, one also finds the metaphorical use of the language of death and dying, understood positively as death to sin, to the old self, to selfishness, accompanied by rebirth, re-creation, a centering on the beloved who now becomes one's life, one's principle of being and motion. See A. HAAS, “*Mors Mystica* – Thanatologie der Mystik, insbesondere der deutschen Mystik,” in: *FZPT* 23 (1976), 304-92; idem, s.v. ‘mort mystique’, in: *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 10:1777-90.

⁵⁰ One also finds a number of phrases in *STh I-II.28* that might be considered sexually suggestive; and Thomas is not naively unaware of this dimension. In 28.5, he uses for his example of a “lower” type of jealousy a husband's jealousy over his wife's body (he is jealous of her because, as regards

may seem so obvious as to defy questioning. Yet, quite apart from the difficulties of tracing out the origins of a metaphorical way of speaking, there is a surprising paradox to reckon with: the ill-suitedness of the highly sensuous language of mysticism for sensuous love itself. If one takes friendship as the scenario, the progressive breakdown and reintegration of self described in *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4 is occurring in both the lover and the beloved, and if the analysis is correct, it would be the same in each. Such equivalency ill-accords with the complementary differences of male and female physiology, and more basically with the stubborn impenetrability of body as such, which makes it an exceedingly poor metaphor of the interpenetration, coalescence, and transformation that love enacts at a psycho-spiritual level. Each friend is piercing and forming the other, and if there is wounding or division, it goes in both directions. In other words, if one should look to the body for the properties of love, or advert, for the sake of argument, to the traditional associations of male-active and female-passive, it would follow on Thomas's metaphysics of love that in a human friendship each friend is both active and passive, manifesting male and female modalities, vis-à-vis the other. In reality, how the Thomistic doctrine of love and *extasis* can be related to various aspects of sexual love is a complicated question, one that I shall not attempt to answer here. It may be said in passing that Aquinas is not lacking in perceptive remarks on these matters, though they are of peripheral concern to him.

Returning to *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4, and its threefold division, we may ask: Is the first division, the compenetration, a *cause* or an *effect* of love? If one considers carefully what Thomas is saying in this passage, it is clear that it must be both: it is an effect and sign of the transformation as well as a condition and cause of it. Here Thomas develops the former aspect: love is said to pierce, wound, and transfix *because* it is transformative. "From the fact that love transforms the lover into the beloved, it makes the lover enter into the interior of the beloved, and conversely." But it is evi-

the kind of possession at issue, she is the sort of good that cannot be shared with another man). Inasmuch as man is an animal, it is not surprising that feelings of jealousy should be associated with sexual desire and possession (as Aquinas notes, following Aristotle, the quarrels of animals are about food and sex: *STh* I.81.2). Nevertheless, since man is a *rational* animal, his reflections on love tend to coalesce around higher, i.e., more personal and spiritual, manifestations of love. The reality of *amor amicitiae* is a more profound reality, more satisfying to the heart, and consequently of greater interest to the philosopher, than *amor concupiscentiae*. Accordingly, the troubadour or the romantic wants to sublimate sexual love into a pure personal devotion (see V. BRÜMMER, *The Model of Love: A Study in Philosophical Theology*. New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993). This spiritualizing tendency being so natural to us, the reader can easily forget that I-II.28 falls within the treatise on sensitive or sensual passions. As Thomas repeatedly says, the urge towards sexual pleasure is one of the most powerful animal passions, and sexual love is the most representative love, at the sensitive level. As befits its place in the I-II, q. 28 sheds light on the structure and workings of such "passionate" love, even though its doctrine is shaped by and meant to give expression to the experience of a fully *human* love developed on higher planes of personality – those that proceed from intellect and will.

dent, too, that love would not be transformative if there were no action being exercised by each person upon the other; the lover would not be gaining or receiving the form of the beloved unless he had already penetrated, and were continually penetrating, *ad interiora amati, et e converso*. The going *ad intima formati* is exactly the process that bestows a new *forma*.

Second division. So, the first level of division is the passing of lover and beloved into one another, which implies that each is broken open by the other's entrance into his innermost self. This division immediately suggests a second. If the entering of lover and beloved into each other is a *transformatio* whereby "the lover in a way passes into the beloved" and vice versa (what Thomas will call *mutua inhaesio* in *ST* I-II.28.2), then presupposed is a kind of *separatio* of the lover from himself. Since "of one thing, there is one form," the lover being transformed into the beloved as the beloved forms him is for that very reason being drawn away from his own form, he is being separated from whatever makes him himself alone, his *idiomata*. Does not the proximity of burning and transformation here bring to mind the tenth chapter of Bernard's *De diligendo Deo*?

Just as a little drop of water poured into a lot of wine loses itself and takes the color and savor of wine, or as a kindled and glowing iron becomes most like the fire, having put off its original and natural form, or as the air imbued with sunbeams seems not so much to be lit up as to be light itself, so in the saints all human affections will melt away from self, and be entirely transfused into the will of God. For how could God be all in all, if in man there be left anything at all of man himself? The substance, indeed, will remain, but in another form, another glory, another power⁵¹.

If one remained utterly within oneself as an isolated unit, going into the interior of the other would not even be possible, nor the returning motion of the other into one's own interior. To be united to the other demands openness to his action of informing or shaping my life and my identity, but this openness demands that I recede from my own form which makes me not yet like the other, not yet *conformed*

⁵¹ "Quomodo stilla aquae modica, multo infusa vino, deficere a se tota videtur, dum et saporem vini induit et colorem, et quomodo ferrum ignitum et candens igni simillimum fit, pristina propria que exutum forma, et quomodo solis luce perfusus aer in eadem transformatur luminis claritatem, adeo ut non tam illuminatus quam ipsum lumen esse videatur, sic omnem tunc in sanctis humanam affectionem quodam ineffabili modo necesse erit a semetipsa liquescere, atque in Dei penitus transfundi voluntatem. Alioquin quomodo omnia in omnibus erit Deus, si in homine de homine quidquam supererit? Manebit quidem substantia, sed in alia forma, alia gloria alia que potentia" (*Bernardi opera*, ed. J. Leclercq et al. Turnhout, Brepols, 1958, 3:143). Translation adapted from that of T. L. CONNOLLY, *Saint Bernard on the Love of God*. Westminster, MD, Newman Press, 1951, 44-45.

to the beloved. Accordingly, love is said to cause *extasis*, which means *positio extra se*⁵². Love gives one a position, a spiritual center or home, outside of oneself – it inclines one to think continually of the beloved, to will the beloved's good for his sake, and to work, as much as one can, for the other's good, again because it is the good of the one I love. In this way I am separated from myself to the extent that my thoughts, desires, and deeds are filled with and oriented towards the beloved and not with myself as separate and distinct from him. While many and profound differences remain between us, including the most basic of all, that we are distinct primary substances or supposita who neither could nor would become ontologically one for the very reason that such oneness would destroy the lover and the love alike, these differences are not dwelt upon; accentuated is the note of living *for the other* and not *for myself*⁵³.

A perfect love makes me rise outside myself in my thoughts and desires and come to rest elsewhere. Like flame at its extremity, I am evaporated into the surrounding air, in the sense that while I am giving myself, I am not clinging to myself in contradistinction to others, but am handing over to the other what is mine to give. Fire tends upwards, its natural place is to be up, and as it goes up, it disappears. It does not turn back to the coals and bury itself in them. It has become so identified with its exigency to go up that it dies into the air. This is the reason why the sanctuary is to be filled during the sacrifice with fragrant clouds rising up from smoldering incense, symbolic of the prayers and aspirations rising up from a heart burning with love. The very name *incensum* implies that the material is burned up as it exudes vapor and scent, like a *holocaustum*, *quod Latina lingua dicitur totum incensum*⁵⁴.

What is of interest to Thomas is not, of course, the obvious difference between loving and burning; for if many lovers have lost their wits from burning desire or flames of lust, still no human being exhales his substance or turns to vapor. What he is looking to is their likeness and their connection to *extasis*: "love is said to cause *extasis* and to burn, since that which burns rises outside itself and evaporates." The prop-

⁵² Cf. *Sent.* III.26.1.4 obj. 1: "Amor enim vehementius affectionem immutat quam spes; unde hominem extra se facit, ut dicit Dionysius, 4 cap. De div. Nom." (Moos, 825, §54).

⁵³ *Politics* 2.4, 1262b10-14: "But the unity which he [Socrates in the *Republic*] commends would be like that of the lovers in the *Symposium*, who, as Aristophanes says, desire to grow together in the excess of their affection, and from being two to become one, in which case one or both would certainly perish." See *STh* I-II.28.1 ad 2.

⁵⁴ See *Super Matt.* (ed. Cai, Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1951), 1, §53: "Tertium est fervor caritatis, quod significatur per lesse, qui interpretatur incensum vel incendium; Psal. cXL, 2: dirigatur oratio mea sicut incensum in conspectu tuo etc."; *STh* I-II.102.3 ad 8: "quod totum comburebatur, et hoc dicebatur holocaustum, quasi totum incensum. Huiusmodi enim sacrificium offerebatur Deo specialiter ad reverentiam maiestatis ipsius, et amorem bonitatis eius. ... Et ideo totum comburebatur, ut sicut totum animal, resolutum in vaporem, sursum ascendebat, ita etiam significaretur totum hominem, et omnia quae ipsius sunt, Dei dominio esse subiecta, et ei esse offerenda" (7:232).

er good of fire is *esse sursum*. "Fire of its proper nature can only be borne upwards⁵⁵." "Any nature of itself tends towards its end, as fire by its lightness is directed upwards, and earth downwards⁵⁶." "The will perfected by the virtue of justice stands to works of justice as fire to going up⁵⁷." "Burning comes from an abundance of heat; hence the Spirit is called burning, because, owing to an abundance of divine love, the whole man burns up into God⁵⁸." "The very moment it is generated, fire starts going upwards as to its proper place⁵⁹." The burning thing is ecstatic in its surrendering of being, and the lover, in his giving of himself, is the same; the flames rise to their vanishing, and the lover breathes himself into the beloved – *ad intima rei devenire*, Thomas had said a moment ago, and what can do this more readily than *spiritus*? – so that he is hidden within the beloved, who for his part is hidden within the lover.

"Spirit" is a name imposed to signify the subtlety of some nature. Hence, it is said of corporeal as well as incorporeal things: for air is called "spirit" on account of its subtlety, whence [an animal's] taking in and expulsion of air is called "inspiration" and "respiration," and wind, too, is called "spirit," and also the most subtle vapors through which the soul's powers are diffused throughout the parts of the body are called "spirits"; and in like manner,

⁵⁵ *Sent.* IV.47.2.1.3 ad 3: "ignis ex propria natura non fertur nisi sursum" (Busa 1:670a). Thomas uses this example of fire again and again as an illustration of properties flowing from a nature. E.g., *Sent.* III.4.3.2.1 obj. 2: "Naturale est quod ex principis naturae causatur, sicut igni ferri sursum" (Moos, 175, §95); *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] II.6: "Quod per se alicui convenit, universaliter ei inesse necesse est: sicut homini rationale, et igni sursum moveri" (Leon. 13:281, Amplius).

⁵⁶ *Sent.* II.41.1.1 obj. 6: "quaelibet natura per seipsam tendit in finem suum, sicut ignis per suam levitatem sursum dirigitur, et terra deorsum" (Mandonnet, 1035). Cf. *SCG* III.18: "sicut dicitur finis id quod aliquid sua actione vel motu acquirere intendit, ut locum sursum ignis per suum motum, et civitatem rex per pugnam" (Leon. 14:42, Sic enim). Yet fire intends not only to attain its own good, which is to be up, but also to communicate its form to others so far as possible, by warming the surrounding air and by generating other fires. *STh* I.60.4: "ignis naturalem inclinationem habet ut communicet alteri suam formam, quod est bonum eius; sicut naturaliter inclinatur ad hoc quod quaerat bonum suum, ut esse sursum"; *STh* I.105.2: "Eiusdem autem est imprimere formam, et disponere ad formam, et dare motum consequentem formam: ignis enim non solum generat alium ignem, sed etiam calefacit, et sursum movet."

⁵⁷ *Sent.* I.39.2.2 ad 4: "voluntas perfecta virtute iustitiae se habet ad opera justa, sicut ignis ad motum sursum" (Mandonnet, 935).

⁵⁸ *Super Epistolam Beati Pauli ad Romanos lectura*, cap. 12 [= *Super Rom.* 12; likewise for all references to the Scripture commentaries], lec. 2, §988: "Procedit autem fervor ex abundantia caloris, unde fervor spiritus dicitur, quia propter abundantiam divinae dilectionis totus homo fervet in Deum" (Marietti 1:183). At *STh* I.108.5, Thomas gives as the first reason why the seraphim are named from fire: "Primo quidem, motum, qui est sursum, et qui est continuus. Per quod significatur quod indeclinabiliter moventur in Deum."

⁵⁹ *SCG* IV.59: "ignis enim, mox generatus, tendit sursum sicut in proprium locum" (15:195, Item); cf. *STh* I.63.5 obj. 4: "res corporalis statim in primo instanti suae creationis incipit habere suam operationem; sicut ignis in primo instanti quo generatus est, incipit moveri sursum."

incorporeal things are called "spirits" on account of their subtlety, even as we call God, and an angel and a soul, "spirit." And from this, too, comes our manner of saying that two men who love each other and are of one heart are "of one spirit" or "together in spirit" [conspirators], just as we also say that they are one heart and one soul, for, as is said in *Ethics* IX, "it is proper to friends to be one soul in two bodies⁶⁰."

The transfer or *transformatio* is complete when the words of the Song of Songs are fulfilled: "My beloved is mine and I am his" (2:16; cf. 6:3). Mine and his in what sense? Although the body and bodily togetherness are integral to human love, this verse is not referring primarily to a physical phenomenon⁶¹. The "mine" does not signify in the manner of a possession, a thing, that one "owns"; we are at the deeper level of the person as person, and the communion proper to persons. The beloved is my innermost form of thought, desire, and deed. This is the height of communion, a height reached *per negationem, per remotionem, per ablationem*. The asceticism of mind required for the ascent to knowledge of the divine, or even of worldly things whose essences are unfathomable reflections of their divine maker, is paralleled by the asceticism of appetite required for the ascent to communion with the beloved⁶².

⁶⁰ *Sent.* I.10.1.4 (Mandonnet, 267): "Spiritus est nomen positum ad significandum subtilitatem alicujus naturae; unde dicitur tam de corporalibus quam de incorporeis: aer enim spiritus dicitur propter subtilitatem; et exinde attractio aeris et expulsio dicitur inspiratio et respiratio; et exinde ventus etiam dicitur spiritus; et exinde etiam subtilissimi vapores, per quos diffunduntur virtutes animae in partes corporis, dicuntur spiritus; et similiter incorporea propter suam subtilitatem dicuntur spiritus; sicut dicimus spiritum Deum, et angelum, et animam. Et inde est etiam quod dicimus duos homines amantes se, et concordēs, esse unius spiritus vel conspiratos; sicut etiam dicimus eos esse unum cor et unam animam; sicut dicitur *Eth.* IX, cap. x: «Proprium amicorum est, unam animam in duobus corporibus esse.» Cf. *SCG* IV.23.

⁶¹ I shall not pause to examine the idea of presence and all the forms it can take, from most perfect to least. A profound analysis of human, personal presence may be found in the works of Gabriel Marcel and in the general audiences of John Paul II on the theology of the body. In these pages I will assume, with Thomas, that the optimal form of mutual presence for human persons, as embodied spirits, is a fully *human* presence, body and soul, "face to face," engaging the senses as well as the intellect. Other forms of communication may well be distinctively human, such as epistolary intercourse or telephone calls, but they are imperfect because they do not embrace the person in his psychosomatic wholeness (and the imperfection is often intended; imagine the chagrin of a secretary whose instruction "Please contact me" were taken rather too strictly). Of course, further distinctions need to be made, as a presence may be superior in one respect yet inferior in another. Thus, while a lover of the music of Anton Bruckner would, all things being equal, prefer to hear a symphony live, sharing the fervor of the moment with the conductor, orchestra, and audience, he may prefer at other times to listen to a favorite recording in the quiet of his own home, undisturbed by coughing ladies or snoring gentlemen. Another example would be love-letters, which, assuming a healthy relationship, are obviously inferior to the real presence of the beloved, yet have the power to be more subtly affecting due to the very admixture of presence and absence – an effect nicely described by Thomas at *Sent.* III.27.1.3 ad 2.

⁶² J. PIEPER, *The Silence of St. Thomas*. Trans. J. Murray and D. O'Connor, New York, Pantheon Books,

Third division. A final division follows, and is once more put forward as a condition for the prior division. "Nothing recedes from itself" – no *separatio a seipso*, and with it *positio extra se*, can take place – "unless [it is] freed from what was containing it within itself," *intra seipsum*. Again Thomas offers an analogy with the physical world: "just as a natural thing does not lose [its] form unless freed from the dispositions whose form was retaining it in matter." For *separatio* and *extasis* to occur, then – whether the physical *separatio* of the form of wood from its matter during burning, or the psychical *separatio* of the lover from himself as he enters into the beloved, "that limit which used to contain him beneath his own limits has to be removed." And it is due to this removal of limitation or boundaries that love is said to melt or liquefy the heart, since a liquid has no definite shape of its own but takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured, acquiring its shape or *forma*. Roger De Weiss comments:

Il semble que pour Thomas, la transformation soit à prendre en son sens littéral: changement de forme, devenir substantiel. Mais il serait excessif de s'arrêter là, car celui qui devient l'autre doit cependant rester la même, sans quoi il n'y aurait plus union mais unité. Comment concilier cette semi-permanence du même avec une aptitude à devenir réellement l'autre? C'est dans le cadre de cette aporie qu'il faut comprendre l'infléchissement du symbolisme de la "liquéfaction du cœur": le liquide n'a plus la substantialité du solide, sans rejoindre l'évanescence du gazeux. Cela permet, en termes plus imagés que strictement métaphysiques, de donner une approximation: le liquide reste lui-même, mais doit être "contenu" dans un "récipient": on associe la semi-permanence et la pénétration⁶³.

The lover can only be borne out of himself when he is not already hardened, resistant to change, limited or bounded in his thoughts and desires, unable to be formed as by another's hands. The adjectives "selfish" and "self-centered" accurately capture the state of a person who, by a long series of choices, has become so limited by and bound up with himself that he can no longer be caught up in and dedicated to something greater than himself, or be penetrated and shaped by a different identity, with its specific needs and virtues. He cannot, as the saying goes, "forget himself."

As a whole, Thomas's response to the objection proceeds analytically, starting

1957; idem, *The Truth of All Things*. Trans. L. Kraut, in *Living the Truth*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1989, esp. 57 ff.; W. N. CLARKE, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*. Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2001, 294-96.

⁶³ «*Amor sui*», 82.

with what it is that love accomplishes (*amor transformat amantem in amatum*: here is the *unio amantis ad amatum*), then asking what *divisiones* are required for this to be accomplished, going from a first division to one that is prior, and lastly to one that is prior still. The response is structured according to the order in which one would discover each element or "property." Conversely, if one looks at the response in the other direction, going from prior to posterior, one can sketch out the order of generation, the genesis, of the communion of lovers; one sees, step by step, what is happening when love comes to be and what must continually happen for it to continue to be. The first thing is liquefaction, the second separation, the third penetration, all of these contributing to the *unio amoris*, the *transformatio amantem in amatum*. The limits that contain the self within itself alone are removed: the lover's heart is melted, *liquefacit cor*. As a result, the lover, receding from these limits, is separated from himself, going out of himself to the beloved: *amor [dicitur] extasim facere et fervere*. Finally, this ecstatic condition of soul, when the lover's heart is neither hardened nor clinging stubbornly to its limited form, renders possible the co-inherence or interpenetration of lover and beloved (*intrare ad interiora ... ad intima rei devenire*) – the entrance of each into the other, hearts given and received, *ut nihil amati remaneat non unitum*.

It is clear that *extasis* precedes (even as, in a different sense, it also follows upon) the union, for unless one had already escaped the ego's field of gravitation, one could not approach the other as a true center of thought, will, and deed. Without the *extasis* that follows from the melting of limits, without the burning desire that carries the lover beyond himself to the beloved, there could not be the giving and receiving, the capacity for co-acting and co-suffering, conveyed by the language of "passing into the beloved" and "piercing to the innermost" – all the more, if we are to compare what happens here to the way a natural form forms a thing wholly and most inwardly. Through the mutual gift that pierces the ego of each, the lover and beloved are enclosed within each other's minds and hearts, co-informing and co-informed (i.e., conforming and conformed). And this is the very union of which Thomas, and Dionysius, are speaking, when they say that love is a *vis unitiva*. "Love is called a unitive force formally, because it is the very union, connection, or transformation by which the lover is transformed into the beloved, and in a certain way is turned into him⁶⁴." One can better understand the point of the mask metaphor Thomas used in the body of the article by thinking of the wearing of a mask as a gesture by which one "takes on" another's identity; and that is exactly how Thomas is describing love – it is the lover taking on the identity of the beloved, not on the surface level of the skin, as a mask worn by an actor, but within the appetite, the heart, the center of the

⁶⁴ *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 2: "amor dicitur virtus unitiva formaliter: quia est ipsa unio vel nexus vel transformatio qua amans in amatum transformatur, et quodammodo convertitur in ipsum" (Moos, 856, §19).

human person: this heart takes on the identity of the other that has been impressed upon it⁶⁵.

II. "Now not I, but Christ": Eucharistic conversion (IV.12.2.1)

An arresting little text from Book IV sheds further light on our discussion. The fifty distinctions of Book IV are primarily concerned with sacraments and the last things. In the last of the distinctions treating the Eucharist (dd. 8-12) we find a discussion of two effects of receiving the Sacrament: increase of virtues and remission of venial sin. A principle is laid down: one may judge of the proper effect of a sacrament from the likeness of its matter. For example, the proper effect of baptism, the washing away of the old life of sin, is known from what its matter actually does and hence what it signifies – the washing away of dirt or filth⁶⁶. Since the eucharistic matter is bread and wine, which are food and drink for us, its proper effect has to be grasped from what food and drink do for their consumers. But there is this difference between the effects of bodily food and those of spiritual food: bodily food restores flesh and increases its bulk by being converted into the one fed, whereas spiritual food acts upon the one who feeds on it, so as to convert him into itself, provided he is properly disposed for this process⁶⁷. Thomas concludes:

The proper effect of this sacrament is the conversion of man into Christ, that it might be said with the Apostle (Gal 2,20): "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me"; and upon this two effects follow: an increase of spiritual quantity and an increase of virtue, and the restoration of what has been lost, in the remission of venial sins or the reparation of any preceding defects⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ Throughout this section we have been freely speaking of the heart, as does Thomas. See W. PRINCIPE, "Affectivity and the Heart in Thomas Aquinas's Spirituality," in: A. CALLAHAN (ed.), *Spiritualities of the Heart*. New York, Paulist Press, 1990, 45-63.

⁶⁶ *Sent.* IV.12.2.1.1: "Respondeo dicendum ad primam quaestionem, quod proprius effectus cuiuslibet sacramenti debet assumi ex similitudine ad materiam illius sacramenti; sicut expurgatio veteris vitae est effectus baptismi per ablutionem aquae significata" (Moos, 524, §165).

⁶⁷ *Sent.* IV.12.2.1.1: "Et ideo cum materiale in hoc sacramento sit cibus, oportet quod effectus proprius huius sacramenti accipiatur secundum similitudinem ad effectum cibi. Cibus autem corporalis primo in cibatum convertitur, et ex tali conversione, deperdita restaurat, et quantitatem auget; sed spiritualis cibus non convertitur in manducantem, sed eum ad se convertit" (Moos, 524, §165).

⁶⁸ "Unde proprius effectus huius sacramenti est conversio hominis in Christum, ut dicat cum Apostolo, Galat. II: Vivo ego, jam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus; et ad hoc sequuntur duo effectus: augmentum spiritualis quantitatis in augmento virtutum, et restauratio deperditorum in remissione venialium vel reparatione cuiuscumque defectus praecedentis" (ibid.). Thomas frequently cites Gal 2,20 when he wants to illustrate the reality of *extasis*, the paradox of the "I" whose life, without ceasing to be a life that is his, has been handed over and transformed by love into another's life, so much so that he lives *out of himself, in another*. Cf. esp. Aquinas's commentary on Gal 2,19-20: *Super Gal.* 2, lec. 6, §106-§107.

Attending to the rich resonances of the language of *conversio* employed in the *Scriptum* to speak of the effects of the Eucharist and linking it with the language of *transformatio* which it echoes, we can well appreciate why Thomas, using both terms, says a little later:

It belongs to charity to TRANSFORM the lover into the beloved, since charity is such that it causes *extasis*, as Dionysius says. And because the increase of the virtues in this sacrament comes about from the CONVERSION of the eater into the spiritual nourishment, therefore an increase of charity is more attributed to this sacrament than an increase in other virtues⁶⁹.

This response is made to an objection which takes for granted the truth that the Eucharist most of all deserves to be called "the sacrament of charity," and that its principal effect is an increase of charity, for it joins the recipient to Christ himself, the efficient, exemplar, and final cause of this virtue as of all others⁷⁰.

One sees in this argument a perfect application of the doctrine Thomas worked out in III.27.1.1. But instead of speaking of an application, would it not be truer to say that it is from his living contact with a mystery like that of the Eucharist, and for the sake of yielding his soul still more fully to it, that Thomas develops his understanding of the ecstatic nature of love in general? Jesus opening up in the sacrament of the altar a mysterious way of entrance into his glorified presence, Jesus giving himself in communion – this is the paradigm of ecstatic love. By showing the reality of love in its highest form and making it possible to eat and drink this love and be transformed into its images, the Eucharist, no less than the Passion of which it is the efficacious sign, leads one into the deepest understanding of what love is⁷¹. In his later *Commentary on John*, Thomas finds a moral in Mary Magdalene's stooping to peer into the tomb on Easter morning: "that she might give us the example to look continu-

⁶⁹ *Sent.* IV.12.2.1.1 ad 3 (Moos, 525, §170): "Caritatis proprium est transformare amantem in amatum, quia ipsa est quae extasim facit, ut Dionysius dicit. Et quia augmentum virtutum in hoc sacramento fit per conversionem manducantis in spiritualem cibum, ideo magis attribuitur huic sacramento caritatis augmentum quam aliarum virtutum."

⁷⁰ That the Eucharist effects a transformation of the eater into the eaten is a belief widespread in Christian antiquity and the Middle Ages. What is more intriguing is how Aquinas links this idea with *extasis*, a link that parallels the eucharistic doctrine of St. Gregory of Nyssa, whom Thomas never cites on this matter. Gregory writes that the soul's journey into God, which is simultaneously a remaking of itself, is an "*ekstasis* toward the divine accomplished by the Eucharist," and that "through the divine food and drink, change and ecstasy from worse things to better things enter together into the soul." Cited in K. CORRIGAN, "Ecstasy and Ectasy in Some Early Pagan and Christian Mystical Writings," in: W. J. CARROLL and J. J. FURLONG (eds.), *Greek and Medieval Studies in Honor of Leo Sweeney*, S.J. New York, Peter Lang, 1994, 33.

⁷¹ On the Incarnation and the Eucharist as sources for understanding the axiom *bonum est diffusivum sui*, see R. GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, "The Fecundity of Goodness," in: *The Thomist* 2 (1940), 226-36.

ally on the death of Christ with the eyes of our mind, for one glance is not enough for the one who loves, in whom the force of love multiplies the desire for seeking⁷²." Nay, more: the activity of searching into the Lord's mysteries demands a continual going-out-of-oneself and a leaving behind of fleshly ways:

When he says "Peter then went out to run to the tomb and that other disciple went with him," he shows how they made inquiry into the news announced: and first he shows the zeal of the seekers for finding out; and this, through a going-out, when he says "Peter then went out and the other disciple." For he who would search into the mysteries of Christ must go out, in a way, from himself and from fleshly ways⁷³.

III. The *extasis* of God (III.32.1.1)

While Thomas never asserts that *extasis* is said of God metaphorically, this conclusion follows from his teaching on the divine nature and on the naming of God, especially in texts where he specifies what *extasis* means when applied to God. The remaining passage of the *Scriptum* that mentions *extasis* is exactly to the point. Taken from the first article of the first question on God's love for creatures (the topic of Distinction 32), Thomas is responding to an argument that God cannot love a creature because, given what love is and does, God would have to be separated from himself, carried beyond himself into the one he loves, as we saw earlier when analyzing the *triplex divisio in amore*. "Love bears the lover into the beloved, so that he now lives the life of the beloved, as Dionysius says. But God is not borne into anything other, since he is immovable, but rather he draws all things to himself, as is said in John 12⁷⁴." The next objection, too, deserves quoting: "Further, the one loving is in a certain way subjected to the beloved, insofar as the affection of the lover is informed by the beloved, as was said above. But God is in no way subjected to the creature; therefore in no way does he love the creature⁷⁵." In answering the former objection,

⁷² *Super Ioan.* 20, lect. 2, §2494 (Marietti, 463): "ut daret exemplum continue oculis mentis mortem Christi prospicere: quia amanti semel aspexisse non sufficit, cuius vis amoris intentionem multiplicat inquisitionis."

⁷³ *Super Ioan.* 20, lect. 1, §2477 (Marietti, 460): "Cum dicit: exiit ergo Petrus et ille alius discipulus, ponitur denuntiatae rei inquisitio: et primo ponitur quaerentium studium ad inquirendum; et hoc per exitum, dum dicit exiit ergo Petrus et alius discipulus. Qui enim scrutari vult mysteria Christi, debet exire quodammodo a se, et a carnali consuetudine."

⁷⁴ *Sent.* III.32.1 obj. 3: "Amor transfert amantem in amatum, ut vivat jam vita amati, ut dicit Dionysius in lib. De divin. nom. Sed Deus non transfertur in aliquid aliud, cum sit immobilis; sed omnia ad se trahit, ut dicitur Joan. XII. Ergo ipse non amat creaturam" (Moos, 1001-2, §8).

⁷⁵ *Sent.* III.32.1.1 obj. 4: "Amans quodammodo subjicitur amato, in quantum affectus amantis amato informatur, ut supra dictum est. Sed Deus nullo modo creaturae subjicitur. Ergo nullo modo amat creaturam" (Moos, 1002, §8).

Thomas sees no need to reject the major premise's celebration of the *extasis amoris*, while in answering the latter Thomas rejects the major premise's attribution of passivity to love as such. What he stresses are the different and contrasting ways in which a lover may be borne into the beloved.

Every love in a certain way bears the lover into the beloved, but in different ways: in one way, insofar as the lover is borne into participating those things which belong to the beloved; in another way, so that he communicates to the beloved those things which are his own. In the first way, therefore, God is not borne into that beloved which is the creature, but [he is] in the second way, insofar as he communicates his goodness to it; and thus Dionysius says that God himself suffers *extasis* through love⁷⁶.

Nor is this enough; one should also grasp a point far from unrelated, the difference between a lover who is such as to be apt to receive or suffer from the beloved to whom he gives himself in love, and a lover who out of his wealth of goodness is simply bestowing good actively upon the beloved, receiving or suffering naught in return.

A passive potency is informed by its object, but an active potency places its form around the object, as is evident with the agent and possible intellect. Hence, just as the divine intellect is not informed by the things he knows through his essence, so neither is his will informed by the things he loves, since he loves them through his own goodness, and by loving communicates his goodness to them⁷⁷.

Let this latter response be kept in mind as a kind of footnote to the former, upon which I shall be commenting.

The difference in the ways in which a lover may be borne into the beloved is perceived as this: whether the lover is borne out of himself by participating in what belongs to another (the life or good of the beloved), or is bestowing upon another

⁷⁶ *Sent.* III.32.1.1 ad 3 (Moos, 1003, §17-§18): "Amor omnis transfert quodammodo amantem in amatum, sed diversimode. Uno modo secundum quod amans transfertur in participandum ea quae sunt amati; alio modo ut communicet amato ea quae sunt sua. Primo ergo modo Deus non transfertur in amatum, quod est creatura; sed secundo modo, in quantum bonitatem suam ei communicat; et sic dicit Dionysius, quod ipse Deus est per amorem extasim passus."

⁷⁷ *Sent.* III.32.1.1 ad 4 (Moos, 1003, §19): "Potentia passiva informatur ex objecto suo; sed potentia activa ponit formam suam circa objectum, sicut patet de intellectu agente et possibili. unde sicut intellectus divinus non informatur rebus quas cognoscit per essentiam suam, ita nec voluntas ejus informatur rebus quas amat: quia eas per bonitatem suam amat, et amando communicat eis suam bonitatem."

what is his own to give – the contrast between *receiving* and *communicating* some perfection. He who *receives* partakes of what is another's, and so, is borne or carried out of himself to the source. He can have what the source can give only by taking hold of it and drinking from it⁷⁸. Hence the lover's relationship to the beloved is a taking in or welcoming of another which enlarges and enriches his own self, a "gaining," and, at the same time, a going out towards that other to share in his life, a "loss" of self. The all-perfect God cannot receive something into himself from another, and by the same token does not go out of himself in the sense of participating in what belongs to another. How could the creature, whose createdness means that its sum total of perfections, its realization in being, is derived from God as first cause and held as a participated likeness of his infinite *esse*, give anything to him that he did not already have, or better, that he *is* not already, in a higher way? The divine *extasis* to which Dionysius pays homage is a different kind of "going out": it is the bestowal of goods, the giving of a gift which brings no advantage to the giver but benefits purely and solely the recipient. Fran O'Rourke puts it well:

Creation is an outpouring of God's excessive goodness. In its most proper and positive sense, the created universe is superfluous to God's being... It is divinely superfluous in its origin and this is infinite mystery rather than abject absurdity. The universe of finite beings flows as a total gift from the sheer generosity of divine goodness. Creation is the "gift outright"; beings add nothing to the perfection of God, just as God would be none the lesser had he not created. I can add no more to God's being than the very nothingness from which I have come. I am entirely a gift to myself bestowed by God. I add nothing to his perfection, yet I must be of eternal value to him; otherwise he would not have freely created me⁷⁹.

God stands out of himself inasmuch as he is present in creatures by the perfections he bestows on them. Since these perfections are so many imitations or participated likenesses of God, in giving them he lavishes himself upon the creature, in the manner in which the latter can receive him.

⁷⁸ To say that he had the source "for himself" would contradict the very notion of a source and repudiate its generosity. Something is had as gift only when it is received as not "from me." The reception of a gift that the recipient cannot give to himself is an invitation to *extasis*: the recipient is perfected by something that does not come from *him* but from *another*, and he is thereby drawn towards the giver by the gift. Here it might be pointed out that as one can be "ecstatic" towards oneself only metaphorically speaking, so, too, one can give a gift to oneself only metaphorically speaking. To preserve their full and literal meaning, the giving of a gift and the standing outside of oneself require distinct persons or supposites.

⁷⁹ F. O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas*. Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1992, 230.

It seems evident on the face of it that God goes out from himself in a way different from the creature's going out of itself, if only for the decisive reason that the creature's total good is *in God*, whereas God's total and all-sufficient good is *in himself*⁸⁰. As Thomas says in the course of the first distinction of Book II:

That which acts on account of desire for an end has an end outside itself by which it is perfected. But this does not belong to God, who acts on account of love of the end, since he himself is an end for himself, had and loved by himself; and therefore we say that the divine will is not perfected by a certain other thing but by itself, since the [divine] will itself is goodness⁸¹.

It does not belong to God to *desire* an end (which implies that the end is not identical to the desirer), but only that he should love the end he himself is. For this reason there is acting *according to* love in God – an activity none other than his substance – but not acting *on account of* desire for an end. God's own goodness is the final cause of his actions, that for the sake of which he acts. Needing no perfection, God desires nothing; he is ever at rest, rejoicing in his infinite perfection. God, then, necessarily willing his own good, freely wills other things to receive a share in that good, by creating and conserving in creatures their likenesses to him.

Near the beginning of Book I, when Thomas is explaining why "he who is" is the most proper name of God, the first argument takes its point of departure from Jerome's claim that "he who is" best expresses the divine perfection, whereupon Thomas notes that the *perfectum*, in the unqualified sense, is "that outside of which there is nothing"⁸² – in other words, that which lacks nothing of actuality. This is con-

⁸⁰ Being united to God by love and knowledge, lifted out of himself into the life of the Trinity, is man's fulfillment in a way that being united to *man*, working for his good and seeking his friendship, could never be *God's* fulfillment. As the Councils teach and Thomas reiterates, the assumption of human nature to the Person of the Word was a staggering exaltation of human nature, not a stooping down of God to collect from the world something He did not already have in a higher way. While we gain a new relation to God through Christ, God gains nothing from us; his love for us is unchanging and gratuitous in the most radical sense.

⁸¹ *Sent.* II.1.2.1 ad 2 (Mandonnet, 46): "Illud quod agit propter desiderium finis, habet finem extra se, quo perficitur. Hoc autem non convenit Deo qui agit propter amorem finis, quia ipsemet est sibi finis a se habitus et amatus: et ideo dicimus, quod divina voluntas non est perfecta quodam alio, sed seipsa, quia ipsa voluntas est bonitas." As we read in *De potentia* 6.6 (in *Quaestiones disputatae*, ed. Bazzi et al. Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1965, 174): "non enim potest dici, quod movens seipsum, nihil desideret extra se, quia nunquam moveretur: motus enim est ad acquirendum aliquid extrinsecum aliquo modo." Cf. *STh* I.9.1: Everything which moves acquires something by its motion.

⁸² For Thomas one can say equivalently that the *infinitum* or the *totum* is that outside of which is nothing. *Compendium theologiae*, lib. 1, cap. 56: "perfectum est extra quod nichil est" (Leon. 42:99.24). For further discussion of points raised in the paragraphs around this note, see P. KWASNIEWSKI, "Transcendence, Power, Virtue, Madness, Ecstasy – Modalities of Excess in Aquinas," in: *Mediaeval Studies* 66 (2004), 129-81, esp. 173-80 and n. 163.

trasted with "our being" and its temporal structure, the non-presence or non-possession of past and future. God "has his whole perfect being," in contrast to all that is not himself (*ens creatum*), which necessarily has something of its being outside of itself and is thus by nature in a condition of lacking and coming into possession of being.

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. But in the divine being 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 being⁸³.

The contrast between God and creature is the contrast between *interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio* and any participation in it which, qua participation, falls short of it⁸⁴. When Thomas remarks that no finite being exists all at once but always has something of its being outside of itself, one glimpses a momentary parallelism with Heidegger's use of the language of *Ekstase* in reference to the threefold structure of temporality, according to which having-been, the present, and futurity are correlated with facticity or thrownness, falling, and existence or projection. *Dasein* is ecstatic as standing outside the already of its past and stretching towards the not-yet of its future. In his treatment of Dionysius, Thomas Carlson shows how the *Ekstase* Heidegger and Thomas attribute to finite being standing between birth and death, and the *ekstasis* Dionysius and Thomas attribute to God as the Good and Beautiful source of all being, are equivocal, in the one case signifying precisely the dependency and movement proper to multiplicity and potentiality, in the other case the simple, changeless, primal generosity which abides in self-identity beyond all that depends on it⁸⁵.

⁸³ *Sent.* I.8.1.1 (Mandonnet, 194-5): "«Qui est», est maxime proprium nomen Dei inter alia nomina. Et ratio hujus potest esse quadruplex: prima sumitur ex littera ex verbis Hieronymi secundum perfectionem divini esse. Illud enim est perfectum cujus 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."

⁸⁴ *STh* I.10, arts. 1 and 3.

⁸⁵ See T. CARLSON, *Indiscretion: Finitude and the Naming of God*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1999, 146-52. Carlson's remarks on Heidegger read like a comment on *ens creatum* in Thomas: "Through this phenomenon of primordial temporality emerges the fundamental finitude of Being, and that finitude must be interpreted in terms of the ecstatic movement that defines temporality. The temporalizing of temporality is a unified movement in which each of the three differentiated temporal modes 'stands out' as an 'ecstasis' in a particular way: 'The future, the character of having been, and the Present, show the phenomenal characteristics of the 'towards-onself,' the 'back-to,' and the 'letting oneself be encountered by'" (150).

The difference between *esse divinum* and *esse nostrum* is present, too, when Thomas in his commentary on Aristotle's *De caelo* contrasts the way in which man is the noblest of corporeal beings because he is the most powerful when it comes to attaining the good, and the way God is the best, simply speaking, because he does not need to *attain* the good at all.

For we see that among these inferior [i.e., sublunary] things, man, having perfect power of soul, has multiple operations, since he can gather many goods: and on account of this he can accomplish many things, not only absolutely speaking, but also according to an order of one thing to another, as for example when he plans out a great series of actions ordered to one end. Nevertheless, man is not, for all that, what is best in the universe, since what is best in the universe, namely God, requires no action in order to attain his proper good. For he does not have any end outside of himself which it is necessary [for him] to attain by some action, but he himself is the end of himself and of all other things⁸⁶.

Let us go back to *Scriptum* III.32.1.1. Granting that love always bears the lover into the beloved, Thomas distinguishes two ways in which this can happen. Either the lover is borne into the beloved in the sense of going beyond his limited self to share something that belongs to the beloved, or the lover shares with the beloved something which is already his own. In both cases, the lover is ecstatic. For either the lover stretches beyond self toward a beloved who is term and completion for him, or the lover, from his own fullness of perfection, bestows upon the beloved a share in his superabundant life, in this manner giving himself. The beloved who receives *from* the lover something which belongs *to* the lover is beneficiary of the lover's ecstatic motion of self-giving. This relationship of the one who is inferior qua beneficiary to the one who is superior qua benefactor is found unqualifiedly in the creature's relationship of total dependency upon the Creator. This relationship can be viewed from the recipient's angle, where it appears as an assimilation of the beloved to the lover by way of the latter's communicated likeness, or from the giver's angle, where it is a

⁸⁶ *In De caelo* II, lec. 18, §4 (Leon. 3:192b-93a): "Videmus enim quod in istis inferioribus homo, habens perfectam animae virtutem, habet multiplices operationes, quia potest multa bona adipisci: et propter hoc multa potest operari, non solum absolute, sed etiam secundum ordinem unius ad aliud, ut puta cum excogitat magnam seriem actionum ordinarum in unum finem. Nec tamen propter hoc homo est optimum in universo: quia id quod est optimum in universo, scilicet Deus, nulla indiget actione quoad adipiscendum proprium bonum. Non enim habet aliquem finem extra se, quem oporteat adipisci per aliquam actionem, sed ipse est finis sui ipsius et omnium aliorum." The *finis sui ipsius* means that God is himself the good in which He perfectly rejoices and rests.

bestowal of gifts upon the poor and open-handed, with the goal of elevation, cohabitation, and commingling of life.

Thomas's understanding of the divine *extasis* thus leads us back to the metaphysics of *esse* – of the participation of any finite being, with its act-potency structure and the ecstatic neediness and longing flowing from it, in the perfectly simple, all-sufficient, self-subsistent, infinite act of being which, as giver and sustainer of being to all and in all, is more intimately present to each and every thing than any thing to itself. No one expresses this paradox better than Augustine: God is *interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*⁸⁷. Quoting De Finance's formulation of this truth ("each creature remains in some way exterior to itself; it does not coincide with what is most profound and central to it: its being"), O'Rourke continues:

God, however, through his causality is present at this very centre. He is more interior to things than they are to themselves: not as an intrinsic principle entering into their constitution but as the abiding source of their *esse*. Aquinas himself indeed relies on this Dionysian mode of expression in his claim that God is universally perfect, containing within himself the perfections of all things. In saying that God "is the being of all that subsists," Dionysius is emphasising that he does not exist in a limited or determined way, but precontains in himself all being in an unlimited manner. God is causally "all in all" inasmuch as he is causally the total perfection of all things⁸⁸.

The truth that God's perfect immanence in all things rests upon his infinite transcendence above them can be expressed also in this way: God's *ekstasis* in all beings – an *ekstasis* so comprehensive that one must say of any individual being: God in his simple wholeness is wholly present *right here*, even more than this thing is present in and to itself – rests upon his absolute *enstasis* in his own being, his eternally changeless actuality of blessedness. He who neither moves nor gains because he is already perfect and altogether good is, for that very reason, he who moves all to himself and gives himself to all, he who perfects others and infuses goodness into them.

The term *enstasis* or *instasis*, not present in Thomas, is used by a number of authors, including medieval ones, to indicate the contrary to or counterpart of *ekstasis*⁸⁹. As *ekstasis* implies being borne out of oneself, *enstasis* implies resting or firmly

⁸⁷ AUGUSTINE, *Confessiones* 3.6.11, ed. with trans. and comm. by J. J. O'Donnell. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1992, 1:27.

⁸⁸ O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas*, 256-57; see the surrounding pages for an excellent summary of how the doctrines of *esse*, immanence, and transcendence, are implied in each other.

⁸⁹ Like *extasis*, *enstasis* has diverse meanings, as three examples will suffice to show. Meister Eckhart uses *instasis* to refer to the pre-existence of creatures in the Word prior to their creation in the world

standing in oneself, without change. Of God alone can this be said unqualifiedly, for he alone is a whole sufficient unto itself; his being so is the very condition of the activity of creation and of universal providence which are unique to him⁹⁰. For the creature, *enstasis* can be a positive or a negative thing. Negatively, it bespeaks the fantasy of self-sufficiency, or selfishness. Positively, it refers to the standing or abiding of the soul within itself as the image of God in process of renewal or re-creation by the indwelling of God. Thus creaturely *enstasis* and *ekstasis* would be the reflection, the simultaneous double result, of God's proper immanence and transcendence, as witnessed by the phrase of Augustine just quoted: *Tu autem, Domine, eras interior intimo meo et superior summo meo*.

If God were to go out of himself in the manner Thomas describes as "borne into participating what belongs to the beloved," he would *ipso facto* cease to be God, the source of all that belongs to the beloved, the one in whom the creature lives and moves and has its being (cf. Acts 17:28). But if God goes out of himself by communicating to others a likeness of perfections properly his own, he has given the creature *himself* by granting it to participate in himself, in the manner suited to it (*per modum recipientis*) – namely, by his willing there to be a created participation that imitates him, not in the manner of a painting, a static or extrinsic likeness of effect to cause, but rather in the manner of a continual *likening* of effect to cause, a continual *orienting* of other-dependent being to self-subsistent Being. "The movement whereby something proceeds from God bears within it as the directing impulse of its own fulfillment an inverse tendency of assimilation and conversion to its origin. It is saturated with a desire to return to its fontal source⁹¹." It is this dynamism, whether in the order of nature or of grace, that defines the fundamental *extasis* of the creature towards its Creator; it is the obverse, God's "communication of his goodness to the creature," that defines the sense in which *extasis* is found in the Creator towards the creature.

(see *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* 4:2133). O. CLÉMENT mentions it in speaking of the alternating rhythm of fullness and aspiration in the life of the Christian: "The more the soul is filled, satiated with God, the more God calls it further beyond. Transfiguration and transcendence, *enstasis* and *ekstasis*, never cease alternating. The more God is known, the more he is found to be unknown. ... Thus the soul advances 'from beginning to beginning'" (*The Roots of Christian Mysticism*. Trans. T. Berkeley and J. Hummerstone, New York, New City Press, 1993, 239-40). M. ELIADE identifies *enstasis* as a state of unification with pure being and the abolition of the phenomenal self, a state known among as practitioners of yoga as *samadhi*, among Sufis as *fana*, and among Buddhists as *shunyata* (cited by R. PATTEE, "Ecstasy and Sacrifice," in: *Shaman's Path*, Boston, Shambhala, 1988, 20). For my purposes, *enstasis*, or the adjective enstatic, signifies a state of plenitude of being from which no egress occurs. This plenitude may be real and infinite, and then it is uniquely God's; it may be real but partial, as is true of any creature in proportion to its inheritance of being; or it may be imaginary, as with an egoist's delusions of grandeur.

⁹⁰ *STh* I.45.5; I.22; I.103.

⁹¹ O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas*, 235.

We are immediately reminded of the conclusion Thomas reaches about the relations between God and creation⁹². Because the relationship of creature to Creator is a real relation, the creature's motion of return (*reditus*), its continual imitation of the exemplar, and its ongoing conversion or turning towards the source as the heliotrope towards the sun are likewise fully real. It is this real relation of dependent participant to independent participated that grounds the arduous discipline of analogous naming by which we take hold of the slender thread of truth about the God who exceeds all thought. The relationship of Creator to creature is, on the other hand, a relation of reason. It follows that the word *extasis* is said of God metaphorically, for in giving himself he is not displaced, divided, or moved from himself, nor is he perfected by the gift; it is rather the recipient and it alone that is changed and moved, bettered by being drawn closer to the source of goodness, or worsened by falling away from that source into its proprietary nothingness⁹³.

The second kind of *extasis* Thomas speaks of in III.32.1.1 ad 3 obtains whenever there is a *bonum diffusivum sui*, a good that spreads itself out to others as a cause leading the effect from potentiality to act, from promise to accomplishment, or maintaining it in perfect actuality. Thus, it is not only the stretching out or "upward tension"⁹⁴ of an effect to the cause on which it depends and in which its own good more truly resides that deserves to be called *extasis*, but also the diffusing or communicating of good from a cause to its effect, whereby the cause is, in a sense, borne into the effect, inasmuch as the good is extended from an agent which has it (or is it) to a patient which has it not and receives it in the mode proper to it as receiver⁹⁵.

⁹² *STh* I.13.7. See also the detailed discussion at *Sent.* I.30.1 ad 2 (Mandonnet, 702-3), which contains the remark: "Per accidens convenit Deo referri ad aliud extra se. Non enim dicitur relative, nisi quia aliud refertur ad ipsum; sicut dicitur Philosophus, quia scibile est relativum, non quia ipsum referatur, sed quia aliud refertur ad ipsum."

⁹³ The contrast of relations is also suggested by the truth that the universe of creatures adds nothing to God, so that God plus creation, to speak crudely, is no greater than God alone: "In orthodox theology of creation the plenitude of God is not filled out, not enriched or augmented or complemented by creatures or by the creating of creatures; nor does the Creator lose or contradict Himself in the being of creatures or in letting be the being of creatures. Because creatures are other than God, it does not follow that they are God othering Himself" (T. PRUFER, *Recapitulations*. Washington, DC, The Catholic University of America Press, 1993, 68).

⁹⁴ This is the phrase by which PROCLUS in Prop. 23 of the *Elements of Theology* (trans. E. R. Dodds, New York, Oxford University Press, 1963, 27) designates the dependency of participated substances upon unparticipated ones, which he also speaks of more generally as their "conversion," *epistrophe*.

⁹⁵ Concerning the last phrase, see J. TOMARCHIO, "Four Indices for the Thomistic Principle *Quod recipitur in aliquo est in eo per modum recipientis*," in: *Mediaeval Studies* 60 (1998), 315-67. For Thomas's use of the Neoplatonic axiom *bonum est diffusivum sui*, see *Sent.* I.34.2.1 ad 4; *SCG* I.37 and III.24; *STh* I.5.4 and 27.5 ad 2; *STh* I-II.1.4 ad 1; *STh* II-II.117.6 obj. 2 et ad 2; *De veritate* 21.1 ad 4. Helpful also are texts on the principle *bonum se communicat*, e.g., *Sent.* I.2.1.4 sc; *Sent.* I.10.1.5 obj. 3 et ad 3; *STh* I.19.2 and 106.4; *STh* III.1.1; *CT* I.124. Of the many discussions in secondary literature, I recommend O'ROURKE, *Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas*, 241 ff. and L. DEWAN, "St. Thomas and the Causality of God's Goodness," in: *Laval théologique et philosophique* 34 (1978), 291-304.

On Thomas's principles, then, when *extasis* is said of God the predication is metaphorical for the same reason that predications of anger, desire, or sorrow are metaphorical. God has no passions and no passibility, but in punishing the sinner God does the same thing that a man injured by an enemy and moved by anger to vengeance would do; hence we name him (God is *angry*) from the effect, while recognizing that what may cause the effect in us is not found in God⁹⁶. Similarly, God cannot stand outside himself or be drawn out of himself, for he is the infinite fullness of being, simple, actual, one; there is no place he is not, there is nothing he lacks⁹⁷. He does not stand to acquire anything from his giving but gives solely for the recipients' good. Thus, for Thomas, God is the only perfectly *liberal* giver, the only one who gives without gaining from the giving⁹⁸. In giving good things to those he loves, for their own sake – above all, in willing to men and angels a share in the blessedness of his divine life – God does just what an ecstatic lover does, does it in a way that as far surpasses all that creaturely lovers can do as uncreated being surpasses created being. Hence *extasis* is said of him *ex parte effectus*, and of him above all.

In Aquinas's subsequent works, whenever discussion turns to the *extasis* or ecstatic behavior of God we are sure to find, in outline form or with embellishment, the same account that was given in the *Scriptum* of two kinds of *extasis* or two ways in which the lover can be borne (in)to the beloved – the one predicable only of creatures, and under the aspect of inferiority, imperfection, dependency, the other predicable of any superior qua superior, but of God first and foremost⁹⁹.

Conclusion

It would surely be false to call the *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* a "neglected" work, for it has always enjoyed the attention of the more assiduous Thomistic scholars and other students of medieval thought. But if, in the centuries immediately after Aquinas's death, distinctions from the *Scriptum* saw more day-to-day use than corresponding questions in the *Summa theologiae*, the situation had long since changed by the time of the 19th-century Thomistic revival. The mainstream study of St. Thomas in the 20th century has tended to focus so much on the two *Summae* and the *Quaestiones disputatae* that the *Scriptum* was, in practice, shunned as a rambling maze of insufficiently developed ideas – more the province of doctoral students practicing cultural archeology than the stuff with which a living Thomism could be nourished. Nevertheless, it can be shown in many instances that a full and subtle grasp

⁹⁶ E.g. *STh* I.13.3 ad 1, 13.6; 20.1 ad 2. See F. J. A. DE GRUIJS, "Thomas Aquinas on *Ira* as a Divine Metaphor," in: *Tibi Soli Peccavi: Thomas Aquinas on Guilt and Forgiveness*. Leuven, Peeters, 1996, 19-46.

⁹⁷ *In Phys.* 3, lec. 9, §7: "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" (2:129b).

⁹⁸ See, e.g., *STh* I.9.1 and 44.4 ad 1; *SCG* I.93 and III.18; *De potentia* 7.10; *De veritate* 23.4.

⁹⁹ For the clearest examples, see *DDN* 4.10, esp. §437, and *ST* I.20.2, obj. 1 and ad 1.

of Aquinas's mature doctrine is nearly impossible without recourse to this youthful work, faltering in some respects but so impressive in others. The present study has yielded us an example of the benefits to be gleaned. While Thomas continues to employ the notion of *extasis* in post-*Scriptum* writings, often in passages characterized by peculiar intensity of feeling or devotion¹⁰⁰, the response at *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4 and other mentions of *extasis* in the *Scriptum* together make a contribution of singular importance to our understanding of the role it plays in Aquinas's *doctrina amoris*.

For some commentators, these youthful texts breathe a "hot and sticky" atmosphere of Neoplatonic *eros*, an exaggerated "romantic" sensibility reminiscent of medieval nuptial mysticism¹⁰¹, that the "mature" Aquinas wisely grew out of, coming to favor the model of friendship, "colleagues engaged in a common adventure"¹⁰².

¹⁰⁰ Examples include *Super II Cor.* 5, lec. 3 and *Super Ps.* 30, n. 1, where *extasis* is invoked to illuminate *excessus mentis*; *Super Ps.* 22, n. 2, where *extasis* is used to describe the state of souls drunk with divine love; *DDN* 7.5, §739, where faith in divine truth is said to cause *extasis* beyond worldly limits; *ST* II-II.174.1 and *ST* II-II.175.2, where *extasis* is connected with inspiration, prophecy, and enrapturement. The term expresses Paul's missionary dynamism (*Super II Cor.* 5, lec. 3, §179; indirectly at *Super Ps.* 17, n. 11) and the same Apostle's enrapturement to the third heaven (*De ver.* 13.5; *Super II Cor.* 12, lec. 1; *ST* II-II.175.6). *Extasis* captures something essential about the sort of lover God is: an ebullient fountain of love that never runs dry and ever nourishes creation at its roots, the only perfectly generous giver of gifts (*Sent.* III.32.1.1 ad 3; *DDN* 4.10; *ST* I-II.28.3).

¹⁰¹ An "idiom, mood, and feel" aptly summarized by Turner: "The western Christian has traditionally been a female soul in love with her Bridegroom. She has fallen in love with him, *my beloved is mine and I am his* (Sg. 2:16). That love afflicts, soothes, consoles, thrills with the anticipation of consummation (Sg. 8:3); the Bridegroom caresses (Sg. 8:3), arouses (Sg. 7:11), kisses *with the kiss of his mouth* (Sg. 1:1); the soul and God are betrothed, they marry, they consummate and the soul becomes pregnant; the story of the soul is a love story, it tells of the vicissitudes of erotic love, of absence and longing for the presence of the beloved (Sg. 3:1), of presence and delight (Sg. 3:4), of possession and elusiveness (Sg. 5:6); there is wounding, there are tears, partings, forgiveness and reconciliation; the union of lovers is penetration, dissolution and absorption of each into the other in ecstatic self-abandonment. This is not the language of friends in conversation or of companions on a journey, of soldiers at war, or of kingdoms at peace; here are no images of a royal race, a wandering people, or even of a people made one by *agape*. These are the tones distinctively of *eros*, the language of hetero-sexual love" (TURNER, *Eros and Allegory*, 25-26).

¹⁰² The phrases belong to Fergus Kerr, who characterizes *Sent.* III.27.1.1 ad 4 (where, as we have seen, Thomas discusses love's power to penetrate, pierce, wound, transfix, cause ecstasy, burning, boiling, melting, etc.) as a "hot and sticky" text, and contrasts it with the "friendship model" of charity that is said to predominate later, implying that the two models stand in opposition. See F. KERR, "Charity as Friendship," in: B. DAVIES (ed.), *Language, Meaning and God: Essays in Honor of Herbert McCabe*. London, Chapman, 1987, 6. A similar judgment is implied by Turner when he writes, after the text quoted in the last note: "Nor is this [language of hetero-sexual love] the language of some secondary tradition, for among the great teachers of the Christian West there is hardly any rival, unless it be the language of friendship preferred by a minority, though admittedly that minority includes authorities of the stature of Aelred of Rievaulx and Thomas Aquinas" (TURNER, *Eros and Allegory*, 26). However, Turner does not seem inclined to press this point too hard in his study, and in fact suspects "Kerr's account of the role of *eros* in Western Christian spirituality" to be a "tendentious caricature" (28). A reply to Kerr is implicit in P. KWASNIEWSKI, "Golden Straw: St. Thomas and the Ecstatic Practice of Theology," in: *Nova et Vetera* [English ed.] 2 (2004), 61-89.

Needless to say, it is of some importance to ask whether, as a matter of fact, the conceptions of the "mature" Aquinas on love's ecstasy are or are not in continuity with the *Scriptum* passages. In my view, the evidence supports continuity; at most, one might see a shift in preferred terminology, not a doctrinal evolution that casts off the earlier *eros*-language and its ecstatic overtones. Were it true that Thomas gradually moved away from the "hot and sticky" Neoplatonism of his youth, would it not then be surprising to find him at every stage of his career, possibly most of all towards the end, speaking repeatedly of love in terms of *ignis* and *benignitas*, *fervor* and *ardor*, *adhaesio* and *inhaesio*, and similar ideas – which mean nothing if not the genuine "heat" of spiritual love and the cleaving, or sticking, of lover to beloved?¹⁰³

One should not ignore the deeply Dionysian, and thus (in the best sense) erotic, coloring of Thomas's doctrine of knowledge and love from start to finish¹⁰⁴. While he is best known for emphasizing love's *perfective* power, Thomas is also happy to say, with the Apostle Paul, that charity at its most intense causes in the lover a longing to be dissolved and to be one with Christ¹⁰⁵. Scripture is seen by him to culminate

¹⁰³ On the importance of the language of *adhaesio/inhaesio* in Aquinas's global view of human perfection and the role reason plays therein, see P. KWASNIEWSKI, "'Divine Drunkenness': The Secret Life of Thomistic Reason," in: *The Modern Schoolman* 82 (2004), 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ In using the term 'erotic' I refer to the philosophical-religious meaning developed in the Western tradition, insightfully summarized in TURNER's *Eros and Allegory*. See also H. E. KELLER, *My Secret is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages*. Leuven, Peeters, 2000; E. LEIVA-MERIKAKIS, *Love's Sacred Order: The Four Loves Revisited*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 2000; L. M. ESPOSITO BUCKLEY, "Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of the Pseudo-Dionysian and Plotinian Concepts of Eros," in: *The Journal of Neoplatonic Studies* 1.1 (1992), 31-61. Given scholarly refutation, it is no longer possible to take seriously the position of A. Nygren, according to which a radical opposition exists between profane *eros* and divine *agape*. (Mention may be made, inter alia, of A. H. ARMSTRONG, "Platonic Eros and Christian Agape," in: *Downside Review* 239 [1961], 219-30; J. M. RIST, "A Note on Eros and Agape in Pseudo-Dionysius," in: *Vigiliae christianae* 20 [1966], 235-43; idem, "Some Interpretations of Agape and Eros," in: C. W. KEGLEY (ed.), *The Philosophy and Theology of Anders Nygren*. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1970, 156-73; BRÜMMER, *The Model of Love*. Hence it should not be thought objectionable that Thomas's conceptions of love in general and of the theological virtue of charity in particular contain a note of erotic dynamism.

¹⁰⁵ *ST* II-II.24.9, referring to the three degrees or levels of charity: "Ita etiam et diversi gradus caritatis distinguuntur secundum diversa studia ad quae homo perducitur per caritatis augmentum. Nam primo quidem incumbit homini studium principale ad recedendum a peccato et resistendum concupiscentiis eius, quae in contrarium caritatis movent. Et hoc pertinet ad incipientes, in quibus caritas est nutrienda vel fovenda ne corrumpatur. Secundum autem studium succedit, ut homo principaliter intendat ad hoc quod in bono proficiat. Et hoc studium pertinet ad proficientes, qui ad hoc principaliter intendunt ut in eis caritas per augmentum roboretur. Tertium autem studium est ut homo ad hoc principaliter intendat ut Deo inhaereat et eo fruatur. Et hoc pertinet ad perfectos, qui cupiunt dissolvi et esse cum Christo. Sicut etiam videmus in motu corporali quod primum est recessus a termino; secundum autem est appropinquatio ad alium terminum; tertium autem quies in termino" (emphasis added). This text, incidentally, also furnishes an indication that "rest" (*quies*), for Thomas, is anything but cool and static. It is an all-consuming dynamic identification with the beloved, experienced as perfect serenity because there is no longer the resistance of unsanctified self-will or the

in two books that celebrate the nuptials of God and the purified soul, Christ and his bridal Church¹⁰⁶. Heavenly beatitude is a full, unspeakably intimate embrace. "In the enjoyment [of God], three things concur: perfect vision, full embracing, and the clinging of a consummated love¹⁰⁷." And while the use of nuptial language in regard to Christ and the Church is comparatively rare in St. Thomas, it is far from absent. Exquisite lines from Bede and Theophylact are cited in the *Catena aurea in Ioannem* on the verse "he that has the Bride is the Bridegroom" (Jn. 3:29)¹⁰⁸. In the *Commentary on John* itself, we read:

"When I am raised up I shall draw," through charity, "all to myself." "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have drawn you to me, having pity on you" (Jer. 31:3). For in this, the charity of God towards man most of all appears, insofar as he condescended to die for us. "God commends his love to us, for while we were still sinners in time, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). In this was fulfilled that which the bride asked for: "Draw me after you, and we shall run in the fragrance of your perfumes" (Song 1:3)¹⁰⁹.

course of isolated self-consciousness to overcome. Rest, *quies*, is love's motion finally being completed in total surrender.

¹⁰⁶ The two books are the Song of Songs and the Apocalypse of St. John; the claim is made in one of Thomas's lectures at the University of Paris upon incepting as Regent Master. For further discussion and references, see KWASNIEWSKI, "Golden Straw," 88.

¹⁰⁷ *Sent.* I.1.1 obj. 10: "Ad fruitionem enim tria concurrunt, perfecta visio, plena comprehensio, et inhaesio amoris consummati" (Mandonnet, 33). *Comprehensio* here means real possession of the good – the *unio realis* towards which love, as *unio affectiva*, impels the lover (cf. *STh* I-II.4.3; I-II.25.2 ad 2; I-II.28.1, esp. ad 2). See *STh* I.12.7 on cognitive *comprehensio*, I-II.3 on appetitive *comprehensio*. In a prayer composed for thanksgiving after Mass, Thomas petitions: "[sit] in te uno ac vero Deo firma adhaesio; atque finis mei felix consummatio" (*The Aquinas Prayer Book*, trans. and ed. R. Anderson and J. Moser. Manchester, NH, Sophia Institute Press, 2000, 82).

¹⁰⁸ "[BEDA.] Sponsam dicit ecclesiam ex omnibus gentibus congregatam, quae virgo est integritate mentis, perfectione caritatis, unitate catholicae fidei, concordia pacis, integritate animae et corporis; quae habet sponsum, de quo quotidie generat. Ceterum frustra est virgo corpore quae virgo non manet in mente. Hanc autem sponsam Christus in thalamo uteri virginalis sibi sociavit, et eandem pretio sui sanguinis redemit. THEOPHYLACTUS. Omnis etiam animae sponsus Christus est; sponsalium vero locus, ubi coniunctio efficitur, locus est baptismatis, sive ecclesia. Dat vero arrham sponsae, peccatorum remissionem, Spiritus Sancti communionem; perfectiora vero in futuro saeculo retribuet dignis. Nullus autem alius est sponsus nisi solus Christus: omnes namque doctores paranymphii existunt, sicut et praecursor."

¹⁰⁹ *Super Ioannem* 12, lec. 5: "Sic ergo exaltatus omnia traham, per caritatem, ad meipsum: Ier. XXXI, 3: in caritate perpetua dilexi te, ideo attraxi te, miserans. In hoc etiam maxime apparet caritas Dei ad hominem, in quantum pro ipsis mori dignatus est; Rom. V, 8: commendat Deus suam caritatem in nobis, quoniam cum adhuc peccatores essemus secundum tempus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est. In hoc complevit quod sponsa petit Cant. I, 3: trahere me post te, et curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum" (Marietti, 313).

In the *Summa theologiae* Thomas explains how God becomes both father and husband to the soul on account of the affection for him that he pours into our hearts:

The relation of servant to master is based on the power which the master exercises over the servant; whereas, on the contrary, the relation of a son to his father or of a wife to her husband is based on the son's affection towards his father to whom he submits himself, or on the wife's affection towards her husband to whom she binds herself in the union of love. Hence 'filial fear' and 'chaste fear' amount to the same, because by the love of charity God becomes our Father, according to Rm. 8:15, "You have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father"; and by this same charity he is called our spouse, according to 2 Cor. 11:2, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ": whereas servile fear has no connection with these, since it does not include charity in its definition¹¹⁰.

Elsewhere Thomas simply writes: "Through charity the soul is united as a bride to God, according to a kind of spiritual marriage¹¹¹," and again, "The conjoining of Christ to the Church, which marriage signifies, is perfected through charity¹¹²." As is well-known, Aquinas sees the power of all the sacraments flowing from the Passion of Christ, who through the sacrament impresses upon its recipient something of that Passion's reality. Asking how this is so for matrimony, he explains in the *Scriptum*: "Although marriage does not conform [a man] to the Passion of Christ as regards punishment, it does however conform [him] to it as regards the charity by which Christ suffered for the sake of the Church, uniting her as bride to himself¹¹³." Because the sacrament of marriage emerges from and is kept alive by the Passion of Jesus and

¹¹⁰ *ST* II-II.19.2 ad 3: "habitus servi ad dominum est per potestatem domini servum sibi subiicientis, sed habitus filii ad patrem, vel uxoris ad virum, est e converso per affectum filii se subdantis patri vel uxoris se coniungentis viro unione amoris. Unde timor filialis et castus ad idem pertinent, quia per caritatis amorem Deus pater noster efficitur, secundum illud Rom. VIII, accepistis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus, Abba, Pater; et secundum eandem caritatem dicitur etiam sponsus noster, secundum illud II ad Cor. XI, despondi vos uni viro, virginem castam exhibere Christo. Timor autem servilis ad aliud pertinet, quia caritatem in sua ratione non includit."

¹¹¹ *De uirtutibus* 2.12, obj. 24: "per caritatem anima unitur Deo ut sponsa, secundum quoddam spirituale matrimonium." Thomas does not dissent from this part of the objection; his response targets an error elsewhere in the argument.

¹¹² *Sent.* IV.31.1.2, obj. 2: "conjunctio Christi ad ecclesiam, quam matrimonium significat, perficitur per caritatem."

¹¹³ *Sent.* IV.26.2.1 ad 3: "quamvis matrimonium non conformet passioni Christi quantum ad poenam, conformat tamen ei quantum ad caritatem per quam pro ecclesia sibi in sponsam coniungenda passus est."

demands, accordingly, a total and irrevocable gift of self, it fittingly *images* or *represents* the inexhaustible charity and ineffable gift of Christ's own person. Marriage is therefore the singularly apt image of the love of charity. Is this an insight Aquinas could recognize as his own? In a passage from the *Summa contra gentiles*, we read:

The greater the friendship the more stable and lasting is it. Now, seemingly between husband and wife there is the greatest friendship: for they are made one not only in the act of carnal intercourse, which even among dumb animals causes an agreeable fellowship, but also as partners in the whole intercourse of daily life: so that, to indicate this, man must leave father and mother (Gen. ii. 24) for his wife's sake. Therefore it is right that matrimony should be altogether indissoluble¹¹⁴.

In other words, sacramental marriage between man and woman is the type of friendship most suited to function as the created image of charity¹¹⁵. It is a divinely instituted sacred sign of the eternally indissoluble, ever-fruitful communion between Christ and every soul that belongs to his bride, the Church. The vitality and dynamism, the paradoxicality of ecstatic *eros* must somehow be infused into other models of love (brotherhood, camaraderie, citizenship, etc.) if they are to serve as true signs of the spousal communion effected on the Cross and made present to us in the supreme sacra-

¹¹⁴ *SCG* 3.123: "Amicitia, quanto maior, tanto est firmior et diuturnior. Inter virum autem et uxorem maxima amicitia esse videtur: adunantur enim non solum in actu carnalis copulae, quae etiam inter bestias quandam suavem societatem facit, sed etiam ad totius domesticae conversationis consortium; unde, in signum huius, homo propter uxorem etiam patrem et matrem dimittit, ut dicitur Gen. 2,24. Conveniens igitur est quod matrimonium sit omnino indissolubile." In the next chapter Aquinas shows that only monogamy is consistent with the kind of friendship that ought to exist between spouses: "Amicitia in quadam aequalitate consistit. Si igitur mulieri non licet habere plures viros, quia hoc est contra certitudinem prolis; liceret autem viro habere plures uxores: non esset liberalis amicitia uxoris ad virum, sed quasi servilis. Et haec etiam ratio experimento comprobatur: quia apud viros habentes plures uxores, uxores quasi ancillariter habentur"; "Amicitia intensa non habetur ad multos: ut patet per Philosophum in VIII Ethicorum. Si igitur uxor habet unum virum tantum, vir autem habet plures uxores, non erit aequalis amicitia ex utraque parte. Non igitur erit amicitia liberalis, sed quodammodo servilis."

¹¹⁵ The argument may be schematized: (1) Charity is best understood as a perfect friendship. (2) The most perfect friendship is, in principle, that between husband and wife. (3) Therefore charity is best understood as the perfect friendship of a husband and a wife. As Thomas expressly endorses the major and minor premises, I am safe in drawing the conclusion. Against the objection that the middle term is equivocal because in one instance it refers to a *natural* relationship and in the other to a *supernatural* relationship, I reply, firstly, that the marriage referred to is a sacramental and therefore supernatural bond, and secondly, that human and divine friendships both exhibit the same structure of elements and are therefore able to be paralleled, the one as archetype, the other as image. Against the objection that I mistakenly conflate marriage and *eros*, I reply that marriage is capable of embodying a chastened or purified *eros* that exhibits the spiritual potentiality of passionate love. In this respect, as in its inherent fecundity, it holds a unique place among friendships.

ment of the Eucharist¹¹⁶. Perhaps, after all, Kerr's phrase "colleagues engaged in a common adventure" unwittingly admits as much. A person who is really "engaged" in some activity is not a detached, slightly bemused observer, she is quite serious and passionate about it. And if the focus of her attentive love is not just a stimulating book or an entertaining concert but a *bona fide* "adventure," especially the kind of adventure that revolves around a person dearly, deeply loved, again this suggests a throwing of one's whole self into something bigger and better than oneself. In short, one may wonder if there isn't more than a hint of *eros* and *ekstasis* even in Kerr's phrase, which was put forward as an alternative to a "hot and sticky" conception of love.

In conclusion, what are the main lessons to be gleaned from the *Scriptum* passages on *extasis*? The central text, a response to an objection accentuating love's violence¹¹⁷, sketches a "phenomenology of love" based upon the unifications and divisions involved in the growth of communion between lover and beloved – a growing "interanimation," to borrow John Donne's phrase¹¹⁸. *Extasis* is spoken of as the lover's departure from his own *forma*. In his thoughts, desires, words, works, he is drawn out of himself to the other he loves, becoming forgetful of self, transferring the roots of his affection to the beloved, and, in the affective order, taking on the beloved's form. Love can cause division, ecstasy, fire in the heart, precisely because of its great power to unite and transform, as the body of the same article explains. When love is strong, it does not leave a changeable lover unaffected and unchanged. Not content to sit still but erupting into action, love makes of the other another self, it makes one spirit of two, uniting, binding. It is therefore superbly fitting that much later, in Book IV, *extasis* resurfaces in a passage on the effects of Eucharistic communion. For

¹¹⁶ That Thomas holds the Eucharist to be the sovereign manifestation and agent of God's love in this world is clear from the following premises, each of which he expounds in many texts: (1) God's love for mankind is revealed in the Incarnation of the Word; (2) this love is superabundantly expressed and poured out in the Passion; (3) in the consecration of the Eucharist the redemptive sacrifice is mystically re-enacted, its fruits made available to all ages; (4) Eucharistic communion brings to the Christian not only the *effects* of the Passion, as does every sacrament, but the very Person, true God and true man, who suffered on the Cross; (5) salvation is essentially incorporation into the Mystical Body of Christ, and this incorporation is the inmost reality, *res tantum*, of the Eucharist. "Ad caritatem autem sacramentum Eucharistiae praecipue pertinet, cum sit sacramentum ecclesiasticae unionis, continens illum in quo tota ecclesia unitur, et consolidatur, scilicet Christum; unde Eucharistia est quasi quaedam caritatis origo, sive vinculum" (*Sent.* IV.45.2.3.1). "Baptismus est sacramentum mortis et passionis Christi prout homo regeneratur in Christo virtute passionis eius. Sed Eucharistia est sacramentum passionis Christi prout homo perficitur in unione ad Christum passum. Unde, sicut baptismus dicitur sacramentum fidei, quae est fundamentum spiritualis vitae; ita Eucharistia dicitur sacramentum caritatis, quae est vinculum perfectionis" (*ST* III.73.3 ad 3). "Eucharistia dicitur sacramentum caritatis Christi expressivum, et nostrae factivum" (*Sent.* IV.8.2.2.3 ad 5 [Moos, 342]).

¹¹⁷ See note 12 for the text of the objection, note 30 for the text of the response.

¹¹⁸ The phrase is found in a poem entitled "The Extasie," included in most anthologies of Donne's poetry.

it was at the Lord's table of *agape* and altar of self-sacrifice that Thomas learned about the *extasis amoris*, as his own verses record: "Reclining with the brethren ... he fed the group of twelve, giving himself with his own hands¹¹⁹."

Abstract

Discussions of love (amor, dilectio, caritas) in St. Thomas Aquinas's Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard often contain ideas and insights that have no exact equivalent elsewhere in the saint's writings. One of the most profound treatments of the subject of love offered by Aquinas is found in Book III, Distinction 27. Here, among other points of interest, we find a remarkable passage on the extasis amoris – love's power to provoke ecstasy, a kind of "standing outside oneself." Analysis of this key text, in company with other passages in the Commentary on the Sentences where the topic of extasis arises, leads us to appreciate their great experiential depth and speculative import. The concept of an extasis amoris significantly enriches our understanding of charity as friendship, of sacramental marriage and mystical marriage, of the moral life with its fundamental thirst for the beatitude of a transforming union with God and, due to this, its intrinsic "law" of self-perfection as self-transcendence. Thus, while the term "ecstasy" does not occur with much frequency in Aquinas's writings, the concept signified by it turns out to play a quite crucial role in his articulation of a doctrine of love. In conclusion, I suggest that this concept sheds light on the overall character and thrust of St. Thomas's theological enterprise, and so helps us to interpret it with a greater sensitivity and balance.

¹¹⁹ "In supremae nocte coenae / Recumbens cum fratribus, / Observata lege plene / Cibis in legalibus, / Cibum turbae duodenae / Se dat suis manibus" (*Aquinas Prayer Book*, 88). See also *ST* III.75.1, where Thomas gives as the second reason in support of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist: "hoc competit caritati Christi, ex qua pro salute nostra corpus verum nostrae naturae assumpsit. Et quia maxime proprium amicitiae est, convivere amicis, ut Philosophus dicit, IX *Ethic.*, sui praesentiam corporalem nobis repromittit in praemium ... Interim tamen nec sua praesentia corporali in hac peregrinatione destituit, sed Unde ipse dicit, Ioan. 6, «qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet et ego in eo.» Unde hoc sacramentum est maximae caritatis signum, et nostrae spei sublevamentum, ex tam familiari coniunctione Christi ad nos" (emphasis added).