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 theologicae instead. Hence, it comes as no surprise that the analysis of love in the Scriptum super Sententias lacks the beautiful orderliness one comes to expect from the author of the Summa theologicae. 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.” 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 parallelis and do surface in more nuanced studies of Aquinas’s doctrine of love, 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


3 An example of which is the valuable study by A. Stibius, “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 list. It is not until we are well into Book III that we arrive at what amounts to a treatise on love and charity, Distinctions 27-32. 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
The definition of amor and caritas; the love of God commanded by precept
3 questions, 12 articles

Dist. 28 Object of charity
Should virtues, animals, angels, bad men, demons, oneself, one's body, be loved from charity?
7 articles

Dist. 29 Order of charity
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.
8 articles

Dist. 30 Love of enemies; merit
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 consist principally in charity?
5 articles

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 subject. 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 bettered. The high esteem Thomas has for Dionysius theology in gen-

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4 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.

5 In Librum Beati Dionysii De divinis nominibus [ADD], ed. Pera, Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1950, cap. 4, lec. 10.

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 John.

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 concrete 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 superiors.


A host of objections, no fewer than nine, are raised against this definition\[11\]. The fourth and longest of these objection raises a striking set of problems.

Further, in On the Heavenly Hierarchies Dionysius sets down "piercing" [sc. acutum] and "burning" [sc. 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 one\[12\].

A forcible objection – one that brings strongly to the foreground the spiritual violence, the psychic disruption 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 asks that the appetible good moves as an unmoved mover, whereas as appetible 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 inquiring 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. Coel. hier., inter proprietates amoris ponit acutum et fervidum; et etiam liquefacio 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, idem extra se positionem. Hae autem omnia ad divisionem pertinent videntur, quia acuti est penetrando dividere, fervidi vero per exhalationem resolvit; liquefactio etiam divisione quaedam, est congelationi opposita; quod est etiam extra se positum, a seipso dividitur. Ergo amor magis est vis divisiva quam univita."
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 suitable\textsuperscript{13}, 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 transformation\textsuperscript{14} of affection into the thing loved\textsuperscript{15}. 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 \textit{Ethics} 9 that "a friend is another self"; and we read in 1 Cor. 6:17: "Whoever adheres to God is one spirit." Now, each thing acts according to the demands and needs\textsuperscript{16} 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-

\textsuperscript{13} The phrase here is impossible to translate literally: \textit{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 \textit{demonstratio} or \textit{gaudium}; one must think rather of \textit{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, \textit{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 \textit{complacentia} in Thomas's \textit{doctrina amoris}, see E. C. Cawson, "Complacency and Concern in the Thought of St. Thomas," in: \textit{Theological Studies} 20 (1959), 1-39, 198-230, 343-95; D. Gaffigan, "Desire for Beatitude and Love of Friendship in Thomas Aquinas," in: \textit{Medieval Studies} 58 (1996), 1-47.

\textsuperscript{14} Thomas uses the word \textit{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 uniformed 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 \textit{transformed} into the agent of this process — gaining in some way the agent’s own form.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{amum 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, \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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 (\textit{amati, amatum, amato}).

\textsuperscript{16} Usually rendered "one spirit with him," though St. Paul simply writes "one spirit."

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

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

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{etiam praeteream} — literally, to work beyond or beside love's inclination.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{operet at quasi personam amati amans in omnibus quae ad amatum spectant}. The idiom \textit{gort ... 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.

\textsuperscript{21} \textit{inserit}, which can also have the sense of "take care of. "look after," "be devoted to."

\textsuperscript{22} This is my attempt to get at the expression \textit{amati terminis regulae}, which could also mean "the beloved's goals are his rule" or "he is governed on the beloved's terms."
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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 lover, just as a form reaches to the innermost recesses of that which it informs and vice versa. Thus, the lover in some 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.”

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 assumpret quasi idem sit, oportet ut quasi personam amanti amatum gerat in omnibus quae ad amatum spectant; et sic quodammodo amor amato inservit in quantum amanti 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] 1.76, esp. art. 8); but it is also true to say, perhaps even truer, that the living body is present to the soul and every “connected” by it (cf. STh II-II.183.2 ad 2; Super epiph. 1, lec. 8: “Quaerens enim in corpore naturali sint tota membrana, scilicet manus, pedes, os et huiusmodi, respondetur hoc esse idee ut diversissimi diversissimi animae, quae ipse potest esse causa, principium, et quae sint virtute in ipsa. Nam corpus est factum propter animam, et non e converso. Unde secundum hoc corpus naturale est quaedam plenitudine animae. Nisi enim esset 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 transfigt Icarum. In medieval physiology the liver (leucr or leucr) 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 this, if not all, of these properties; this adds subtle shades of meaning to the statement he makes here. See G. Forezelli, Thotis Latinitatis Lexicon, s.v. “leucr.” Pratti, Albergaetius, 1685, 3:333-54. The entry reads: “nomen viscerae maximae in dextra parte sub praecordii stimm.” and quotes Isidore of Seville: “nomen habet e quod ignis ibi habet sedem,” and Cicero: “cerebrum, cor, pulmones, leucr: haec enim sunt domiclia 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 passions animae (STh II-II.48.2 corp.; ad 1); the heart is also at the center of the blood system (Sent.

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

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. 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 division—of self that necessarily accompanies the fundamental process of unification which takes place between those
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 love. 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 Rousselet in his study The Problem of Love in the Middle Ages. 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, Rousselet 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 other. What

IV.11.3.4.3, expositio textus: “per sanguinem in corde generatum vitals operatio in omnia membra diffunditur” [Moss, 489, §§25]. In the Prologue of Super Irenaeum (Busa S.966), he states that viscerà et leucrè symbolize the compassiones pietas of a true prophet; cf. Super Theronum 3 (Busa S.128c, §11).

28 The word extasis is being employed here in its strictly etymological sense; ex-stasis, a standing outside oneself. The phrase dicitur amor extasiam facere et ferre veri 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 ferret extra se ebullit et exhulat, 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 amatam, sed est ibi trivio divisio. Ex hoc enim quod amor transformat amantem in amatam, facit amantem intrare ad interiorem amantem et e converso, ut nihil amanti remaneat non unitum; sicquom forma pervenit ad intima formati et e converso. Et ideo amans quoadammodo penetrat in amatam, et secundum hoc amor dicitur acutus. Acut enim est dividendo ad intima rei devenire. Et similiiter amans penetrat amantem ad interiora eius pervenieni. Et propter hoc dicitur quod amor vulneret, et quod transfigruit eum.”

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 Areopagita: 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.


33 While Sent. III.27.1.1 ad 4 is a clear example of a text with a strong tincture of what Rousselet 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-reneding or self-renouncing similar to that which the proponents of ecstaticism describe, and if so, how does he differ from them?24 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*. 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 threefold 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 undisputed, just as a thing’s form is innermost in it and encompasses all of it, leaving nothing uniformed. 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 union.25 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” *concretum* which are made to be simply one. Accordingly, another version gives “continuativa”.

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

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24 “Praeterea, omnis concretio est quaedam unio. Ergo superfluum fuit utrumque ponere in definitione amoris univitum et concretivum” (Moos, 854, §11).

25 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 quinimum dicendum quod unio est duplex. Quaedam quae facit unum secundum quid, sicut unio congregatorum se superficiciale tangit; et talis non est unio amoris, cum amans in interiora amati transformatur, ut dictum est. Alia est unio quae facit unum simpliciter, sicut unio concretorum et formarum et materiae; et talis est unio amoris, quia amor facit amatum esse formam amantis; et ideo supra unionem addit concretionem ad differentiam primae unionis, quia concreta dicuntur quae simpliciter unum sunt effecta; unde et alia littera habet continuativa.”

26 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) St Th. I-II.28.5 on the wound of love, never cites its companion articles – 28.2 on *mutua inhaesion*, 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 *extasis* a bad name. In Thomas’s writings, however, it has a good name, for it names a perfection of love.

33 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.
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.88

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 possible.89 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 appetite.

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 appetite. 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 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 loved, 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." But when the one loved is in one respect present and in another respect absent, the lover experiences pleasure mingled with affliction.90

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." 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

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88 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.1.8.12 ad 1, ed. Borget, 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 Summa, Book I, d. 27.

89 Speaking of a text we will quote presently, Sent. III.27.1.3 ad 2 ("amor ... factit quod amans sit secundum affectum ipsa res amata"), M. J. FARSON 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 essentiarum 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: 'factit amantem intrare ad interiorem 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).

90 Thomas writes: tunc maxime afflictit, the one loved most of all afflicts the lover.

91 A poetic rendering of amor languentis facti, love causes languish, illness, weakness.

92 Sent. III.27.1.3 ad 2 (Moss, 665-66, §62:463); "Similiter etiam vehementor est amor quam delectatio; quia amor est per informationem appetitus ab appetibili, delectatio autem per conjunctionem rel ex re praesente sibi convenientiae. Non est autem tanta conjunctione rel ad rem quanta conjunctionis appetitus ad appetibile; quia res adveniens quae delectionem causat, non conjungitur secundum naturam, quia hoc non fit illud; unde est ibi quasi conjunctione contactus, sed appetitus est ipsius appetibilis secundum suam naturam et substantiam. Unde quando appetitus informat per appetibile, est quasi conjunctioni continuatitatem et concretionem. Unde amor plus unum qu rebounde, quia factit quod amans sit secundum affectum ipsa res amata; delectatio autem est per partipationem aliquis ab illo, secundum quod est realiter praesens. Scientiam autem quod quando amans est praesens reale, secundum quod possibile est, tunc est delectatio, siut ex conjunctione maxime convenientia. Quando autem est omnino absens secundum rem, tunc maxime afflictit: siut ex divisione continuo sequitur dolor, quia amor est continuativa vis, ut dictum est; et inde dictum, quod amor languentis facti. Quando autem est secundum aliquis praesentem et secundum aliquis absens, tunc habet delectionem admitter eam affectionem."
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 him. 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 is already 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 categories. 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 vision. 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-interesse. 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 disintegration 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.


46. In many texts Aquinas minglest images of the contrary dispositions of the human heart, such as hard or melted, stony or fiery, 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 3:82); Super Ps. 21, §11 (Bussa 6:77b); Super Ps. 51, §2 (Bussa 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 unity.

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 literally and negatively as an injury, but metaphorically and positively as the result of an intense love that pierces 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 love. 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 contrary.

47. While critical of aspects of his position, H.D. SMITH praises Rousselot for “bringing back the problem of love to that of the one and the many” (“Au point de vue surnaturel comme au simple point de vue naturel, tout le problème de la réalisation humaine est un problème d’unité. Adhère aux Deo, adhère à Dieu par l’intelligence, adhère à Dieu par la volonté,” (“L’unification par l’amour,” in: Revue Apologetique 56 (1933), 389).

48. See also STB I-II:28.5, utrum amor sit passio laesio animantis.

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 Rousselet, 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 spiritualite 10:1777-90.

50. One also finds a number of phrases in STB I-II:28 that might be considered sexually suggestive; and Thomas is not naïvely 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 transfuse 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 consequent-

ly of greater interest to the philosopher, than amor concupiscientiae. Accordingly, the troubadour or the romantic wants to sublimate sexual love into a pure personal devotion (see V. BEINER, 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.28.28 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 expres-

sion 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 intimam formam is exactly the process that bestows a new form.

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 flavor 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 transfigured 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 conform

er good of fire is esse sursum. “Fire of its proper nature can only be borne upwards,” “Any nature of itself tends towards its end, as fire by its lightness is directed upwards, and earth downwards.” “The will perfected by the virtue of justice stands to works of justice as fire to going up.” “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 God.” “The very moment it is generated, fire starts going upwards as to its proper place.” 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 deventre, Thomas had said a moment ago, and what can this do 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,

52 Sent. IV.4.72.1.3 ad 3: “ignis ex propria natura non fertur nisi sursum” (Busa I.670a). Thomas uses this example of fire again and again as an illustration of properties flowing from a nature. E.g., Sent. III.4.3.21 obj. 2: “Naturale est quod ex principiis naturae causatur, sicut igni ferri sursum” (Moos, 175, §93); Summa contra gentiles [SCG] II.6: “Quod per se alci se convenit, universaliter ei insese necesse est: sicut hominis rationale, et igni sursum movetur” (Leom. 13:281, Ampliatus).

53 Sent. II.41.1.1 obj. 6: “quaelibet natura per seipsam tendit in finem suum, sicut ignis per suum levitatem sursum dirigitur, et terra deorsum” (Mandonnet, 1035). SCG III.18: “sicut dictur finis id quod aliquid sua actione vel motu acquirere intendit, ut locum sursum ignis per suum motum, et civitatem rex per pupam” (Leom. 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 warning 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 naturalitatem includatur ad hoc quem quaserat bonum suum, ut esse sursum”; STh I.105.2: “Exams autem in imprimere formam, et disponeas ad formam, et dase motum consequentem formam: ignis enim non solum generat alium ignem, sed etiam calfacit, et sicut sursum movetur.”

54 Sent. I.39.2.2 ad 4: “voluntas perfecta virtute justitiae se habet ad operar iusta, sicut ignis ad motum sursum” (Mandonnet, 935).

55 Super Epistolam Beati Pauli ad Romanos lectura, cap. 12 [« Super Rom. 12; likewise for all references to the Scripture commentaries], loc. 2, §598: “Procedit autem fervor ex abundanza caloris, unde fervor spiritus dicitur, quia propter abundaminium divinae dilectionis totum hominum fervet in Deum” (Marletti 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 indeclinabili moventur in Deum.”

56 SCG IV.59: “ignis enim, mox generatur, tendit sursum sicut in proprium locum” (15:195, Item); cf. STh I.63.5 obj. 4: “sae corporals statim in primo instanti suae creationis incipit habere suam operationem: sicut ignis in primo instanti quo generatus est, incipit moveri sursum.”
incorpooreal 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” [conspiratores], 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 bodies.”

The transfer or transformation 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 phenomenon. 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 ablacionem. 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 beloved.

60 Sent. 1.10.1.4 (Mandonnet, 267): “Spíritus est nomen positum ad significandum substantiam aliqui- jus naturae; unde dicturus tam de corporalibus quam de incorporeis: aer enim spiritus dictitur proprius substantiam; et exinde attractio aeris et expulsio dictur inspiratio et respiration; et exinde ven- tus etiam dictur spiritus; et exinde etiam subtilissimi vapores, per quos diffun- duntur virtutes animae in partes corporis, dicuntur spiritus; et similiter incorpora- ly propem quum substantiam dicuntur spiritus; sic ut dicamus secundum Deum, et angénum, et animam. Et inde etiam quod dicimus duos homines amantes se, et concordes, esse unus spiritus vel conspiratores; sic ut dicamus eos esse unum cor et unam animam; sic 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 audaces 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 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.


63 «Amor sui», 82.

Third division. A final division follows, and is once more put forward as a condition for the prior division. “Nothing recedes from itself” — non 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 positions 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 reterer 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 carde de cette aportion qu’il faut comprendre l’infléchissement du symbolisme de la “liquéfaction du cœur”: le liquide n’a plus la substance du solide, sans rejoindre l’évanescente du gaseux. Cela permet, en termes plus imaginés 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 pénétration.

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

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 transformation amantem in amatum. The limits that contain the self within itself alone are removed: the lover's heart is melted, liquefactive cor. As a result, the lover, receding from these limits, is separated from himself, going out of himself to the beloved: amor [dictur] extasim facere et ferre. 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 intimae rei deventire) – 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 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 him". 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

human person: this heart takes on the identity of the other that has been impressed upon it."^45

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 filth. 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 process. 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 separation of any preceding defects."^46


^46 Sent. IV.12.2.1.1: "Respondeo dicendum ad primum questionem, quod proprie effectus cujuslibet sacramenti debet assumi ex similitudine ad materiam illius sacramenti; sicut expurgatio veteris vitae est effectus baptismi per ablationem aquae significata" (Moos, 524, §165).

^47 Sent. IV.12.2.1.1: "Et idem cum materiale in hoc sacramento sit cibus, opopert quod effectus proprius huic sacramento accipiat simul similitudinem ad effectum cibi. Cibus autem corporalis primo in cibum convertitur, et ex tali conversione, deperditas restitut, et quantitatem auge; sed spiritualis cibus non convertitur in manubundam, sed eum ad se convertit" (Moos, 524, §165).

^48 Unde proprio effectus huic sacramenti est conversionis hominis in Christum, ut dicat cum Apostolo, Galat. ii: Vivo ego, jam non ego: vivit vero in me Christus; et hoc sequuntur duo effectus: augmentum spiritualibus quantitatis in augmento virtutum, et restitutio deperditorum in remissione venialium vel reparatione cujuscumque 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, loc. 6, §106-§107.

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^45 Sent. III.27.1.2: "amor dictur virtus unitiva formaliter: quia est ipsa unitu vel nexus vel transformatio qua amans in amatum transformatur, et quodammodo convertitur in ipsum" (Moos, 856, §19).

^46 Sent. IV.12.2.1.1: "Respondeo dicendum ad primum questionem, quod proprie effectus cujuslibet sacramenti debet assumi ex similitudine ad materiam illius sacramenti; sicut expurgatio veteris vitae est effectus baptismi per ablationem aquae significata" (Moos, 524, §165).

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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 contin-

⁶⁹ *Sent.* IV.12.3.1 ad 3 (Moos, 525, §170): "Caritas propitium est transformare amantem in amatam, quia ipsa est quae extasiam factum, ut Dionysius dicit. Et quia augmentum virtutum in hoc sacramento fit per conversionem manu factus in spiritualem cibum,ideo magis attributur huius sacramentio caritatis augmentum quam aliarem virtutem."

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 R. CORRIGAN, "Ecstasy and Ectasy in Some Early Pagan and Christian Mystical Writings," in: W. J. CARROLL and J. J. EULALO (eds.), Greek and Medieval Studies in Honor of Leo Sweeney, S. J. New York, Peter Lang, 1994, 33.


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 seeking?" Nay, more: the activity of searching into the Lord's mysteries demands a continual going-out-of-onself 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 ways⁷².

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 immutable, but rather he draws all things to himself, as is said in John 12." 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 creature." In answering the former objection,

⁷² *Super Ioan.* 20, lect. 2, §2494 (Maretti, 463): "ut darem exemplum continue oculos mentis mortem Christi prospere: quia amantis semel aspexisse non sufficit, cuius vis amors intentionem multiplicitatis inquisitionis."  

⁷³ *Super Ioan.* 20, lect. 1, §2477 (Maretti, 460): "Cum dicit: exit ergo Petrus et ille alius discipulus, ponitur denuntiatae rel. inquisitor; et primo ponatur quaerentium studium ad inquisitionem; et hoc per exitum, dum dicit exit ergo Petrus et alius discipulus. Qui enim scrutatur vult mysteria Christi, debet esse 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 immobilius; sed omnia ad se trahit, ut dicitur Joan. XII. Ergo Ipsi non amat creaturam" (Moos, 1002-2, §8).  

⁷⁵ *Sent.* III.32.1 obj. 4: "Amans quodammodo subjicitur amato, iniquum activitatis amantis amato informatur, ut supra dicitum est. Sed Deus nullo modo creaturae subjicitur. Ergo nullo modo amant 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 love.

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 them.

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 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 it. 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 me.

God stands out of himself inasmuch as he is present in creatures by which 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.

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76 *Serm. III.32.1.1 ad 3* (Moos, 1003, §17-§18): "Amor omnis transiit quodammodo amantem in amatum, sed diversimodo. Uno modo secundum quod amans transiit in participandum ea quae sunt amata; allo modo ut communiceat amato ea quae sunt sua. Primo ergo modo Deus non transiit in amatum, quod est creatura; sed secundo modo, inquantum bonitatem suam et communicat; et sic dicit Dionysius, quod ipsa Deus est per amorem extasis passus."

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

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 supposit.

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 himself88. 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 goodness89.

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”90 – in other words, that which lacks nothing of actuality. This is contrasted 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 being91

The contrast between God and creature is the contrast between interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possitio and any participation in it which, qua participation, falls short of it92. 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 it93.

88 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.

89 Sent. II.1.2.1 ad 2 (Mandonnet, 46): “Ille quod agit propter desiderium finis, habet finem extra se, quo perfectum. Hoc autem non convenit Deo qui agit propter amorem finis, quia ipse est sibi finis se habitus et amatus: et ideo dicimus, quod divina voluntas non est perfecta quodam alio modo, sed seipsa, quia ipsa voluntas est bonitas.” As we read in De potestate 6.6 (in Quaestiones disputatae, ed. Bazzi et al. Turin-Rome, Marietti, 1965, 174): “non enim potest dici, quod movens sese, nihil desiderat extra se; quia non quam movetur: motus enim est ad acquirendum aliquid extrinsecum. Cum sequatur quod movere est.” Cf. STh I.9.1: Everything which moves acquires something by its motion.

90 For Thomas one can say equivalently that the infinitum or the totum is that outside of which is nothing. Compendium theologiae, lib. I, cap. 5b: “perfectum est extra quod nihil est” (Leoun. 42:99.24). For further discussion of points raised in the paragraphs around this note, see F. Kwasienski, “Transcendence, Power, Virtue, Madness, Ekstasy – Modalities of Excess in Aquinas,” In: Medieval Studies 66 (2004), 129-81, esp. 173-80 and n. 163.

91 See T. CARLSON, Indicature: 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 ‘ekstasis’ in a particular way: ‘The future, the character of having been, and the Present, show the phenomenal characteristics of the ‘towards-one-self,’ the ‘back-to,’ and the ‘letting oneself be encountered by’” (150).


93 STh I.10, arts. 1 and 3.
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., sublunar] 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 things67.

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

66 In De caelo II, Ic. 18, §4 (Leon. 3;192b-93a): “Videmus enim quod in ipsis inferioribus homo, habens perfectum animae virtutem, habet multiplices operationes, quas potest multa bona adipsi: et propter hoc multa potest operari, non solum absolutum, sed etiam secundum ordinem unius ad alius, ut puta cum excogitam magnum seriem actionum ordinatam 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 propium bonum. Non enim habet aliquam finem extra se, quem oportet adipisci per aliquam actum, sed ipse est finis sui ipsius et omnium allorum.” The finis sui ipsius means that God is himself the good in which He perfectly rejoices and rests.


68 O’Rourke, Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas, 256-57; see the surrounding pages for an excellent summary of how the doctrines of esse, immance, and transcendence, are implied in each other.

69 Like estasis, enthasis has diverse meanings, as three examples will suffice to show. Meister Eckhart uses enthasis to refer to the pre-existence of creatures in the Word prior to their creation in the world
We are immediately reminded of the conclusion Thomas reaches about the relations between God and creation.92 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 nothingness.93

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 receiver.95

92 STh I.13.7. See also the detailed discussion at Snt. I.30.1 ad 2 (Mandonnet, 702-3), which contains the remark: "Per accidents convenit Deo referri ad aliquid extra se. Non enim dictum relative, nisi quia aliquid referatur ad ipsum; sicut dicit Philosophus, quia scibile est relativum, non quia ipsum referatur, sed quia aliquid referatur 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 completed 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. P. волос, Reflections, 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. Dobs, 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," ephistrophe.  
95 Concerning the last phrase, see J. Tomarchio, "Four Indices for the Thomistic Principle Quod recipitur in alibus est in eo per modum recipiens," in Medieval Studies 60 (1998), 315-67. For Thomas's use of the Neoplatonic axiom bonum est diffusivum sui, see Snt. I.34.2.1 ad 4; SgC 1.37 and III.24; STh I.5.4 and 27.5 ad 2; STh II-I.14 ad 1; STh II-I.117.6 ob 2 et ad 2; In veritate 21.1 ad 4. Helpful also are texts on the principle bonum se communicat, e.g., Snt. I.2.14 sc; Snt. I.10.1.5 ob 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. Doss, "St. Thomas and the Causality of God's Goodness," in Laval théologique et philosophique 34 (1978), 291-304.

(see Dictionnaire de spiritualité 4:2133). O. CLEMENT mentions it in speaking of the alternating rhythm of fullness and aspiration in the life of the Christian: "The more the soul is filled, sated with God, the more God calls it further beyond. Transfiguration and transcendence, extasis 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. ELISAI identifies extasis 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. PATTIT, "Exstasy and Sacrifice," in: Shaman's Path, Boston, Shambhala, 1988, 20). For my purposes, extasis, or the adjective ecstatic, 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.  

91 STh I.45.5: 122.1.103.  
92 O'RoURKE, Pseudo-Dionysius and Aquinas, 235.
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 God. 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 lacks. 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 giving. 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 unreacted 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, impendency, dependency, the other predicable of any superior qua superior, but of God first and foremost.

**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

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 devotion, the response at Sent. III.27.11 ad 4 and other mentions of *extasis* in the *Scriptum* sometimes 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 mysticism, that the "mature" Aquinas wisely grew out of, coming to favor the model of friendship, "colleagues engaged in a common adventure".

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100 Examples include *Super II II Sent. 5*, loc. 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, §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 enraptured. The term expresses Paul's missionary dynamism (*Super II I Sent. 5*, loc. 3, §179; indirectly at *Super Ps. 17*, n. 11) and the same Apostle's enraptured to the third heaven (*De ver. 13.5*; *Super II II Sent. 12*, loc. 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 ad 3; *DDN* 4.10: ST-II-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 careses (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 woundung, 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.27.11 ad 4 (where, as we have seen, Thomas discusses love's power to penetrate, piece, wound, transfuse, cause ecstasy, 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 Aedele 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 suggests "Kerr's account of the role of *eros* in Western Christian spirituality" to be a "tententious caricature" (28). A reply to Kerr is implicit in P. KOWALOWSKI, "Golden Straw: St. Thomas and the Ecstatic Practice of Theology," in: *Novum et Veterum* [English ed.], 2 (2004), 61-89.
in two books that celebrate the nuptials of God and the purified soul, Christ and his
bridal Church\footnote{100}. 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 love\footnote{101}.” 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 \textit{Cateria aurea in Ioanne}\footnote{102}
on the verse “he that has the Bride is the Bridegroom” (Jn. 3:29)\footnote{103}. In the \textit{Commen-
tary 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)\footnote{104}. 

\footnote{100} On the importance of the language of \textit{adhaesio/inaesio} in Aquinas’s global view of human perfect-
ion and the role reason plays therein, see P. Kwasniewski, “Divine Drunkenness: The Secret Life

\footnote{101} In using the term ‘erotic’ I refer to the philosophical-religious meaning developed in the West-
ern tradition, insightfully summarized in Turner’s \textit{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. Leina-
Espinoza Buckley, “Ecstatic and Emanating, Providential and Unifying: A Study of the Pseudo-
Given scholarly refutation, it is no longer possible to take seriously the position of A. Nygren,
according to which a radical opposition exists between \textit{pros eis} and \textit{adhaesio}. (Masset
may be, inter alia, of A. H. Armstrong, \textit{Platonic Eros and Christian Agape}, in: \textit{Downside
Review} 239 [1961], 219-30; J. M. Roy, “A Note on \textit{Eros} and \textit{Agape} in Pseudo-Dionysius,” in: \textit{Vigi-
lae christianae} 20 [1966], 235-43; idem, “Some Interpretations of \textit{Agape} and \textit{Eros},” in: C. W. Kelsey
(ed.), \textit{The Philosophy and Theology of Andes Nygren}. Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press,
1970, 156-73; Brumberg, \textit{The Model of Love}. Hence it should not be too objectivization
that Thomas’s conceptions of love in general and of the theological virtue of charity in particu-
lar contain a note of erotic dynamism.

\footnote{102} 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 operatur per caritatis augmentum. Nam pri-
mo quidem incumbit homini studium principale ad recendam a peccato et resistendum concu-
placensis eius, quae in contrariam caritatis movent. Et hoc pertinet ad intellectues, in quibus carit-
as est nutrienda vel fovenda ne corrupatur. Secundum autem studium succedit, ut homo prin-
cipaliter intendant ad hoc quod in bono proficit. Et hoc studium pertinet ad proficiat. Et hoc studium pertinet ut in eis caritas per augmentum roboretur. Tertium autem studium est ut
hoc ad hoc principali iterint ad \textit{Dei inhaerentia et eo frustur}. Et hoc pertinet ad perfectos, qui capi-
unt dissolvit et esse cum Christo. Sicuit etiam videmus in motu corporali quoquum primum est recessus a
termino; secundum autem est appropriariatio ad alium terminum; tertium autem quies in termino”
(emphasis added). This text, incidentally, also furnishes an indication that “real” (\textit{quus}, for Thomas,
is anything but cool and static. It is an all-consuming dynamic identification with the beloved, ex-
perienced as perfect serenity because there is no longer the resistance of unsanctified self-will or the
curse of isolated self-consciousness to overcome. Rest, \textit{quies}, is love’s motion finally being complet-
ed in total surrender.

\footnote{103} The two books are the \textit{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.

\footnote{104} Sent. I.l.1 obj. 10: “Ad frutionem enim trinum concurrent, perfecta visio, plena comprehensio, et
inhaesio amoris consummati” (Mandonnet, 33). \textit{Comprehensio} here means real possession of the
good — the \textit{unio realis} towards which love, as \textit{unio affectiva}, impels the lover (cf. STh I-II.4.3; I-II.25.2
ad 2; II-II.28.1, esp. ad 2). See STh I-I.2.7 on cognitive comprehensio, I-I.3 on appetitive comprehen-
sio. In a prayer composed for thanksgiving after Mass, Thomas petitions: “[i]n te unum vero Deo
firma adhaesio; atque finis met felix consummatio” (The Aquinas Prayer Book, trans. and ed. R. Ander-
son and J. Moser, Manchester, NH, Sophia Institute Press, 2000, 82).

\footnote{105} “[Reda] Sponsam dicta ecclesiis ex omnibus gentibus congregatam, quae virgo est integrata men-
titis, perfectione caritatis, unitate catholicæ fidelis, concordia pacis, integritate animae et corporis;
qua habet sponsum, de quo quotidie generat. Ceterum frustra est virgo corporeae quoque virgo non
manet in mente. Hanc autem sponsam Christus in thalamo ueteris virginis ubi sociavit, et eadem
prehto su spiritus redemit. Thespiaculat. Omnis etiam aniamae sponsus Christus est; sponsalium
vero locus, ubi coniunctio effectur, locus est bapstismatis, sive ecclesia. Dat vero arzham sponsae,
peccatorum remissionem, Spiritus Sancti communionem; perfectione vero in futuro secuto retti-
buet dignit. Nullus autem alius est sponsus nui solus Christus: onnus nanque doctores paramy-
phili existunt, scit et praecepsor.”

\footnote{106} \textit{Super Ioanem} 12, lect. 5: “Sic ergo exaltatus omnia traham, per caritatem, ad meipsum: lce XIX,
3: in caritate perpetua dilexi te, idee attracta te, miserans. In hoc etiam maxime appareat caritas Del
ad hominem, inquantus pro ipsis mori dignatus est; Rom. V. 8: commendat Deus suum caritatem
in nobis, quoniam cum adhuc pecatores essum secundum tempus. Christus pro nobis mortuos est.
In hoc complevit quod sponsa petit Cant. I. 3: trahite me post te, et curremus in odorem unguen-
torum 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 definition 110.

Elsewhere Thomas simply writes: “Through charity the soul is united as a bride to God, according to a kind of spiritual marriage,”111 and again, “The conjoining of Christ to the Church, which marriage signifies, is perfected through charity.”112 As is well-known, Aquinas sees the power of all the sacraments flowing from the Passion of Christ, who through the sacrament imposes 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 himself.”113 Because the sacrament of marriage emerges from and is kept alive by the Passion of Jesus and

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110 ST II-II.19.2 ad 3: “habituo servit ad dominum est per potestatem domini servum sibi subiectum, sed habitu o filii ad patrem, vel uxoris ad virum, est e converso per affectum filii se subdentes patri vel uxoris se coniungentis viro unione amoris. Unde timor filiorum et castus ad idem pertinent, quia per caritatem amorem Deus pater nominat, secundum illud Rom. VIII, acceptis spiritum adoptionis filiorum, in quo clamamus, Abba, Pater; et secundum eandem caritatem dictur etiam sponsus, secundum illud II ad Cor. XI, despond vos unui viro, virginitem castam exhibere Christo. Timor autem servitius ad alius pertinent, quia caritatem in sua ratione non includit.”

111 *De seuitibus* 2.12, obj. 24: “per caritatem anima unitur Deo ut sponsa, secundum quoddam spirituali matrimonio.” Thomas does not dissent from this part of the objection; his response target gets an error elsewhere in the argument.

112 Sent. IV.31.1.2, obj. 2: “conjunctio Christi ad ecclesiast, quam matrimonium significat, perfectur per caritatem.”

113 Sent. IV.26.2.1 ad 3: “quavis matrimonium non conformat passioni Christi quantum ad poenam, conformat tamen ei quantum ad caritatem per quam pro ecclesia sibi in sponsam conjungenda passus est.”

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114 SCG 3.123: “Amicitia, quanto major, tanto est firmior et diuturnior. Inter virum autem et uxorem maxima amicitia esse videtur: adunantur enim non solum in actu carnalibus copulai, quae etiam inter bestias quandam suavem societatem facti, sed etiam ad totius domesticae conversationis consor- tum; unde, in signum humili, homo propter uxorem etiam patrem et matrem dimittit, ut dictur Gen. 2,24. Conveniensigit 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 quaedam aequalitate consistit. Si igitur muteri non licet habere plures viros, quia hoc est contra certitudinem prole; licet autem vir habere plures uxores: non est lib- erale amicitia uxoris ad virum, sed quasi servili. Et haec etiam ratio experimento comprobatur: quia apud viros habentem plures uxoribus, uxorique quasi ancillaret habentur”; “Amicitia intensa non habet ad multos: ut patre per Philosophum in VIII Ethicorum. Si igitur uxor habet unum virum tantum, vir autem habet plures uxoribus, non erit aequalis amicitia ex utraque parte. Non igitur erit amicitia libera, sed quandoammodo 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 one, 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 confute 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 Eucharist. 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 ekstasis? The central text, a response to an objection accentuating love’s violence, sketches a “phenomenology of love” based upon the unifications and divisions involved in the growth of communion between lover and beloved – a growing “interinamnimation,” to borrow John Donne’s phrase. Ekstasis 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, ekstasis resurfaces in a passage on the effects of Eucharistic communion.

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 sacramenti ecclesiastici unio, continens illum in quo tota ecclesia unitur, et consolatur, scilicet Christum; unde Eucharistia est quasi quasi caritatis origo, sive vinculum” (“Sent. IV.45.2.3.1). “Baptismus est sacramentum moris et passionis Christi prout homo regeneratur in Christo virtute passionis eius. Sed Eucharistia est sacramentum passionis Christi prout homo perfitur 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.73.3.3 ad 3). “Eucharistia dicitur sacramentum caritatis Christi expressivum, et nostrae factivum” (“Sent. IV.8.2.2.3 ad 5” Moos, 342).

The phrase is found in a poem entitled “The Eatsie,” 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 exsatis amoris, as his own verses record: “Reclining with the brethren ... he fed the group of twelve, giving himself with his own hands.”

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 exsatis 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 exsatis arises, leads us to appreciate their great experiential depth and speculative import. The concept of an exsatis 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.

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 sacramenti ecclesiastici unio, continens illum in quo tota ecclesia unitur, et consolatur, scilicet Christum; unde Eucharistia est quasi quasi caritatis origo, sive vinculum” (“Sent. IV.45.2.3.1). “Baptismus est sacramentum moris et passionis Christi prout homo regeneratur in Christo virtute passionis eius. Sed Eucharistia est sacramentum passionis Christi prout homo perfitur 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.73.3.3 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 Eatsie,” included in most anthologies of Donne’s poetry.

119 “In supremae nocte coeae / Recumbens cum fratibus, / Observa lege plene / Cibis in legalibus, / Cibum turbae duodecim / Se dat suis manibus” (Aquinas Prayer Book, 88). See also ST III.73.1, where Thomas gives as the second reason in support of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist: “hoc competit caritati Christi, et qua pro salute nostra corpus verum nostrae naturae assumptum. Et quia maxime proprium amicitiae est, convivere amici, ut Philosophus dicit, IX Ethic., sui praesentiam corporalem nobis serenissimam indicat in praemium ... interim tamen nec sua praesentia corporali in hac pergratinatione destituisset, sed Unde ipse dicit, Ioan. 6: «qui manducat meum carmem et bibit meum sanguinem, in me manet et ego in eo.» Unde hoc sacramentum est maxime caritatis signum, et nostrae spi sublevamentum, ex tam familiariter coniunctione Christi ad nos” (emphasis added).