

Charity, Modernity and Anthropological Centrality in Saint Tomas of Villanova*

MACARIO OFILADA MINA

“Los místicos españoles del siglo XVI preludiaron una verdadera Reforma española, indígena y propia, que fue ahogada en germen luego por la Inquisición”

M. de Unamuno,
Contra esto y aquello

“Alles spricht den Verzicht in das Selbe. Der Verzicht nimmt nicht. Der Verzicht gibt. Er gibt die unerschöpfliche Kraft des Einfachen. Der Zuspruch macht heimsich in einer langen Herkunft.”

M. Heidegger,
Der Feldweg

Spain's foremost contemporary philosopher, José Ortega y Gasset, wrote that philosophy is a “*curiosa aventura* (curious adventure)”¹. Indeed, it is. It is curious, as he himself explains, because it is a quest for the unknown. “It seeks out the universe. And the universe is something we do not know radically or what

* The present study is the text of the annual St. Thomas of Villanova Conference delivered by the author on November 25, 2006 on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the founding of the St. Thomas of Villanova Institute of Philosophy, Diliman, Quezon City. It was originally titled: “St. Thomas of Villanova: Mystical Anthropology and Philosophical Modernity.”

¹ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Obras Completas* Vol. VII (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1987), 300.

we absolutely ignore in its positive content.”² Curiosity is going out into the unknown. Philosophy begins with curiosity. It is taking risks. Its task, again quoting Ortega, is “*capturar el Universo, cazar el Unicornio* (to capture the Universe, to hunt for the Unicorn).”³

Because of this in philosophy we are always students. Better said, in philosophy we are always beginners. Beginners are always in search. Beginners begin by searching, by hunting, by capturing until they are eventually captured, hunted and even possessed because they were found in their personal vulnerability as searchers exposed to the rough elements of reality in as much as it is lived.

So much so, in order to be a beginner, one has to be initiated just like a freshman, just like a neophyte. It is in this light, that I have come to view philosophy as a mystagogy,⁴ from *mystes* or Mystery and *agogeio* meaning to lead, to bring, to initiate. And how does this initiation take place? By communication.⁵

The present study is a philosophical essay on a great mystic of the Augustinian Order. Because it is an essay, it is an attempt, a preliminary attempt with no intention of making an exhaustive hermeneutics. Rather, its pretensions are more modest, i.e., it proposes to derive philosophical contents from the work of our author. In other words, this essay proposes a philosophical perspective in interpreting his doctrine. As such it is introductory and exploratory.

Doubtless, St. Thomas of Villanova (1488-1555) belongs to the triumvirate of the great Spanish spiritual masters and mystics of the Augustinian Order:⁶ Fray Luis de León (the father of the

² Ibid., 308-309.

³ Ibid., 330.

⁴ See my initial reflections: “Possible Relationship between Mystagogy and Philosophy and its Bearing on Theology and Spirituality” *Philippiniana Sacra* 34 (1999), 219-246.

⁵ Cf. A. Delzant, *La communication de Dieu* (Paris: Ed. de Cerf, 1981).

⁶ Cfr. For historical and theological backgrounders: R. Baron, “Rapports between saint Augustine et Hugues de Saint-Victor” in *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* (1959), 391-429; C. Boyer, *Christianisme et neoplatonisme dans la*

Recollect movement among the Augustinians), of course, St. Thomas of Villanova and St. Alonso de Orozco, all of them linked to the University of Salamanca, Spain's Oldest University, one of the great medieval universities together with Paris, Oxford, Cambridge and Bologna and still one of Europe's most renowned centers of learning.

Status Quaestionis: Mysticism and Mystagogy

A mystic is the subject of an authentic experience of divinization in the Absolute⁷ in its transcendence within the immanence of his existence and thus, opens up a narrative of this paradox between transcendence and immanence, infinity and finitude. This experiential paradox requires that the mystic close his eyes and mouth upon being initiated into the mysteries. This initiation is an evolution of the person within the Absolute.⁸

The mystic closes his eyes because the experience of the Mystery⁹ demands that he shut off the light of natural reasoning and enter into a higher, superior form of reasoning. He closes his

formation de S. Augustin (Paris, 1920); F. Cayré, *La contemplation augustinienne. Principes de la spiritualité de saint Augustin* (Paris: André Blot éditeur, 1927); Idem., "Notion de la mystique d'après les grands traités de saint Augustin" in Several Authors, *Augustinus Magister*, Vol. II (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954), 609-622. For a direct historical and doctrinal survey: D. Gutiérrez, *Del origen y carácter de la escuela teológica hispano augustiniana de los siglos XVI y XVII* (El Escorial: La Ciudad de Dios, 1941); B. Ibeas, *Los ascéticos agustinos españoles* (Madrid: España y América, 1925); I. Monasterio, *Místicos agustinos españoles* (El Escorial: Editorial Agustiniiana, 1929); P. Muñoz Vega, "Los problemas de la experiencia mística a la luz del pensamiento agustiniano" in Several Authors, *Augustinus Magister*, Vol. I (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1954), 603-607; N. de Santa Teresa, *La "Ciudad de Dios", filosofía de la mística. De San Agustín a San Juan de la Cruz* (El Escorial: La Ciudad de Dios, 1956), 151-178.

⁷ Cf. H. Rondet, "La divinisation du chrétien" in *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 71 (1949), 449-476; M. Lot-Borodine, *La déification de l'homme* (Paris, 1970).

⁸ Cf. J. González Arintero, *La evolución mística* (Salamanca: Editorial San Esteban, 1989).

⁹ Cf. K. Rahner, "Vom christlichen Geheimnis der Ehe" in K. Lehmann & A. Raffelt (eds.), *Karl Rahner Lesebuch* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 387-390.

mouth because the experiential content of the Mystery is secret and at the same time, ineffable.¹⁰

In effect, the subject of a mystical experience, who is in effect the subject of a mediation of the Absolute in its transcendence within the same subject's immanence, transcends the conventional structures governing language, expression and even experiencing. The only concrete manifestation of such a manifestation from the linguistic viewpoint is silence. But experientially there is the fullness of reality made present in immanence in its transcendence. José Ortega y Gasset criticizes the mystics because of their silence before the Mystery and yet acknowledged that the mystics were the greatest writers in Spanish literature.¹¹ This is the locus of true sublimity: the struggle to make the experience speak despite its ineffability, the power of the Word over silence not to conquer or annihilate the silence but to make it speak in its depths, beyond the common norms of expression.¹² Wittgenstein labels this "das mystik" or the mystical, that which is inexpressible, that which shows or manifests itself.¹³ It manifests itself as the real in itself, beyond all linguistical categories.

¹⁰ Cf. L. Bouyer, "Mystique. Essai sur l'histoire d'un mot" in *Supplément Vie Spirituelle* 3 (1949), 3-23; L. Cognet, *Les problèmes de la spiritualité* (Paris, 1957); Ch.-A. Bernard, *Le projet spirituel* (Rome, 1970).

¹¹ Cf. his famous essay: "Defensa del teólogo frente al místico".

¹² I have taken into account: F. Lázaro Carreter, *El dardo en la palabra* (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 1997); J.A. Marina, *La selva del lenguaje. Introducción a un diccionario de los sentimientos*, 3ª ed. (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1999).

¹³ L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.522. Apparently, Wittgenstein coincides with Ortega's opinion when he writes: "The right method of philosophy would be this. To say nothing except what can be said, i.e., the propositions of natural science, i.e., something that has nothing to do with philosophy: and then always, when someone else wished to say something metaphysical, to demonstrate to him that he has given no meaning to certain signs in his propositions. This method would be unsatisfying to the other – he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy – but it would be the only strictly correct method.", *Ibid.*, 6.53. Apparently, Wittgenstein wants to qualify philosophy from the criteria of positivist and empirical science within the horizon of Logical Positivism. Also: A. Comte, "Cours de Philosophie Positive" in *Ouvres*, Vol. I (Paris: Librairie des mathématiques, 1968-1970). From the realm of theology, see: W. Pannenberg, *Wissenschaftstheorie und Theologie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973).

A mystic is a person immersed in the Mystery. Mystery is above all an experiential paradox.¹⁴ It is the presence of the transcendental Absolute within the immanent experiential level of man, whose experience of this transcendental absolute opens up into an experiential narrative which we call history, wherein the Absolute makes itself the real and reality in the life of man in its immanent unfolding. Thus, Mystery delineates two poles: the transcendental¹⁵ (the Absolute which allows itself to be experienced as God,¹⁶ who for the Christian mystic is always the Trinity,¹⁷ in an intimate and loving sense as Father, Brother, Friend even Lover¹⁸ without sacrificing its metaphysical transcendence.

Mysticism or being a mystic should not be confused with its sometimes accompanying phenomena such as levitation, locutions, visions, etc. There are some mystics who do not manifest such symptoms. What makes them mystics is the intimacy, intensity and authenticity of the presence of the transcendental Absolute in their lives and how they live their immanence existence,

¹⁴ Cf. L. Borriello, "L'esperienza" in Several Authors, *La teologia spirituale. Atti del Congresso Internazionale OCD* (Rome: Ed. Teresianum, 2001), 593-611; Idem. "Esperienza Mistica" in Several Authors, *Dizionario di Mistica* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1998), 463-476.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Lotz, *Transzendente Erfahrung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 1978).

¹⁶ Cf. J. Mouroux, *L'expérience chrétienne* (Paris: Aubier, 1954); A. Leonard, "Expérience spirituelle", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, Vol. IV, 2005-2026; T. Alvarez, "Experiencia cristiana y Teología espiritual" *Seminarium* 26 (1974), 94-110; Ch.-A. Bernard, "Structures et passivité dans l'expérience religieuse" *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 100 (1979), 643-678; X. Pikaza, *Experiencia religiosa y cristianismo* (Salamanca: Ed. Sígueme, 1981); J. Martín Velasco, *La experiencia cristiana de Dios* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 1995).

¹⁷ Cf. C. Tresmontant, *La mystique chrétienne et l'avenir de l'homme* (Paris: Aubier, 1977); G. Moio, "Mistica Cristiana" in Several Authors, *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità* (Rome: Città Nuova, 1979), 985-1001; Several Authors, *Trinidad y Vida Mística* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1982); R. Misonneuve, *Les mystiques chrétiens et leurs visions de Dieu Un et Trine* (Paris: Ed. de Cerf, 2000); X. Pikaza, *Enquiritidion Trinitatis* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 2005).

¹⁸ Cf. S. McFague, *Models of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

especially with the analogy of language to bridge the Mystery of the great difference between the Absolute and man,¹⁹ within the horizon of the Absolute, which for the Christian mystic is always personal and not only the Absolutely Other and who calls man to a personal communion (κοινωνία).²⁰ Such a presence has to be understood in terms of experience, in terms of the mediation of the transcendental to bridge itself with the immanent. Thus, experience is the immediate presence (presence immediate) of that which comes close to us or manifests itself to us.²¹

Philosophy and Modernity in Villanova's Writings of Spirituality: Beyond the Tradition of Systems

St. Thomas of Villanova mainly wrote beautiful sermons in Latin, pastoral writings and decrees (as Archbishop of Valencia) in Spanish, letters to important personages such as Popes and Kings, and spiritual and mystical writings also written in Spanish. Admittedly, much of the material we have available (based on the classical Manila edition of the *Opera Omnia* in 6 volumes published in the late nineteenth century out of which all official traditions have been made)²² are theological, pastoral and spiritual in character. Where is the philosophy in Villanova's

¹⁹ I have found this study to be helpful on this regard: R.F. Luciani Rivero, *El misterio de la diferencia. Un estudio tipológico de la analogía como estructura originaria de la realidad en Tomás de Aquino, Erich Przywara y Hans Urs von Balthasar y su uso en teología trinitaria* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2002). Also: D. Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination. Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (London: SCM, 1981).

²⁰ Cf. J. Martín Velasco, *Espiritualidad y mística* (Madrid: Ediciones SM, 1994); S. Guerra, "Mística" in X. Pikaza & N. Silanes (eds.), *Diccionario Teológico. El Dios Cristiano* (Salamanca: Secretariado Trinitario, 1992), 897-916; D. de Pablo Maroto, *Teresa en Oración* (Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 2006), 49ff.

²¹ Here I have taken into account the definition of M. Müller, *Expérience et historie* (Paris-Louvain, 1959), 13.

²² Here is the complete reference: St. Thomas of Villanova, *Divi Thomae a Villanova: Opera Omnia* (Manila: Ed. "Amigos del País", 1881-1897). I am citing the works according to this reference with the help of the modern version of S. Santamaría (ed.), *Obras* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1952).

corpus of writings? Unfortunately, until the present there has been no philosophical study of Villanova's thought.²³

Spirituality, for purposes in the present reflection, can be understood as the way of man (who is a spirit not because he is immaterial but because of his vocation to unite Himself totally with the Absolute who is a Spirit; "spirit" here means transcendence). Mysticism, because of its immediate link with the Mystery (which is the Absolute made experientiable by mediation in our immanent setting), is the very root of this way or process and not just its end or goal. It is its criteria, essence, path. Writes an author: "While spirituality inspires people to give concrete body to their response to the summons of God, mysticism is the condensation of spirituality, the focus where the spirit takes fire, the eye of the whirlwind where all is stillness. Put yet another way, mysticism is the theological dimension of spirituality: the dimension that speaks of the One giving herself to be known, of 'I-AM-THAT-I-AM' (Ex. 3:14), of 'I-AM-WITH-YOU' (Mt. 28:20), of 'Be good cheer. IT-IS-I. Be not afraid' (Mc.6:50)."²⁴ Mysticism, in the words of St. Bonaventure, is "*cognitio Dei sperimentalis*... a knowledge of God founded on experience."²⁵

²³ There have been studies as to Villanova's mysticism but never from a philosophical perspective. Methodologically, the mystics are excluded from surveys of philosophy. This is the attitude adopted by A. Guy, *Historie de la philosophie espagnole* (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse, 1983). There are other authoritative surveys that follow the dictum of Unamuno when it comes to the philosophical value of Spanish mysticism, but none have included St. Thomas of Villanova nor advocated a philosophical study of his thought, cfr. J. Domínguez Berrueta, *Filosofía Mística Española* (Madrid: Instituto Luis Vives de Filosofía, 1947); G. Fraile, *Historia de la filosofía española*, Vol. I (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1985); J. L. Abellán, *Historia crítica del pensamiento español, Vol II: La edad de Oro (Siglo XVI)*. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1986); A. Volpi (ed.), *Enciclopedia de las obras de filosofía*, 3 Vols. (Barcelona: Ed. Herder, 2005). Philosophically, St. Thomas of Villanova has been neglected even by the foremost specialists on Spanish mystical thought.

²⁴ M. Van Best, *Poetry of Hadewijch* (Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 22. See also: B. Jiménez Duque, *Teología de la mística* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1963); Several Authors, *Vita cristiana ed esperienza mistica* (Rome: Ed. Teresianum, 1982); R. Woods (ed.), *Understanding Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1980); R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism. Sacred and Profane*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

²⁵ St. Bonaventure, III *Sententiae*, d. 35, q. 2, corp. art.

Many would qualify the knowledge attained in mysticism as irrational and henceforth, non-philosophical. With St. Thomas Aquinas, we can speak of a superior kind of knowledge, that is elevated by grace (here he seems to employ Augustinian language) and attains a knowledge in love.²⁶ In another significant text, St. Thomas of Aquinas writes: "Alia autem est cognitio divinae bonitatis seu voluntatis affectiva seu experimentalis, dum quis experitur in seipso gustum divinae dulcedinis et complacentiam divinae voluntatis."²⁷

Clearly, we are confronted with a superior kind of knowledge wherein reason is elevated. Reason is immanent. It is elevated to participate (μεθεξῆς) in transcendence. This reason expresses itself in the very experience of the Absolute, the literary inspiration and in the textualized doctrine. Our hermeneutics is based on this text wherein experience, inspiration and doctrine converge.²⁸ The mystical text is fruit of such an experiential knowledge in love and the recreation of such an experience in terms of inspiration and doctrine converging finally in the appearance of the text. As Don Miguel de Unamuno writes, "Conocer es querer y recrear... To know is to love and to recreate."²⁹

"The greatness of a philosophy is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or that it enables us to release in concepts. So the unique, exclusive bond between concepts and philosophy as a creative discipline must be tested in its finest details. The concept belongs to philosophy and only to philosophy."³⁰ Especially in his spiritual writings, St. Thomas of Villanova offers us conceptual knowledge of the experiential kind directly linked to an experience of the Absolute in the immanence of our history. This concept opens up an interdisciplinary approach, opening philosophical, theological,

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.10, a.10c.

²⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II, q.97, a. 2, ad 2.

²⁸ Cfr. my study: "Mystical Texts as Disclosures of Mystagogical Worlds. Hermeneutics and the Question of Religious Language" *Studies in Spirituality* 14 (2004), 335-354.

²⁹ M. de Unamuno, "En torno al casticismo" in *Obras Completas*, Vol. I (Madrid: Escelicer, 1968), 842.

³⁰ G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* H. Tomlinson & G. Burchell trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 34.

psychological or anthropological and poetic elements.³¹ This is our starting point in our philosophical discussion of his work, perhaps the first ever to be done. Don Miguel de Unamuno once wrote that Spanish philosophy is fluid and is diffused in literature, in life itself, in action and especially in mysticism and not in the so-called philosophical systems.³²

The creation of systems was a breakaway from the mold of the ancients and that of the philosophers or theologians of the so-called middle ages. Systems were intellectual constructs or reductions of reality to intellectual schemas, concepts within a framework of the dominance of reason. Experience (*Erfahrung*) was configured, reduced and compartmentalized into a system, culminating in Hegel.³³

St. Thomas of Villanova, without any system, made use of concepts inherited from the Christian Biblical and theological heritage in dialogue with philosophical and literary culture, as evidenced by the quotations present in his writings, especially in his erudite sermons.³⁴

But St. Thomas of Villanova is not modern because of his concepts, inherited from an environment. Nor because of systems because he did not construct one. He was a thinker, a mystical thinker, a mystical philosopher or someone in search of wisdom, out of love. But this wisdom is not merely wisdom that is acquired by human effort. It is experiential wisdom, wisdom that is infused (here I am using Augustinian and Neoplatonic language).

³¹ Writes the great literary critic, A. Cilveti, "En las obras de los místicos abundan expresiones de matiz filosófico (las cosas son nada, el tiempo es ilusión), psicológico (sentido, alma, espíritu), teológico (gracia, virtudes), poético (fondo del alma, esponsales).", *Introducción a la mística española* (Madrid: Ed. Cátedra, 1974), 35-36.

³² "Pues abrigo cada vez más la convicción de que nuestra filosofía, la filosofía española está líquida y difusa en nuestra literatura, en nuestra vida, en nuestra acción, en nuestra mística, sobre todo, y no en sistemas filosóficos.", M. de Unamuno, *Ensayos*, Vol.II (Madrid: Aguilar, 1942).

³³ Cfr. M. Alvarez Gómez, *Experiencia y Sistema. Introducción al pensamiento de Hegel* (Salamanca: UPSA, 1978);

³⁴ In one of the most authoritative anthology of Spanish mystics, St. Thomas of Villanova is classified as a modern mystic, Cf. A. L. Cilveti (ed.), *La literatura mística española. Antología. Vol. II: La edad moderna* (Madrid: Ed. Taurus, 1983), 63-75.

As a mystical philosopher, the Augustinian Archbishop of Valencia loves wisdom implicating his total self in the question. For him wisdom is not superficial, but it is rooted in the Mystery, rooted in the question that involves one's total self, one's integrity, one's spirit.³⁵ Hence, his thought opens up as a spirituality, a way or a journey for the spirit towards the Absolute Spirit.

It could be said that Salamanca was in many cases, especially in terms of cosmology, the first modern university. It was the first university to defend the thesis of Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1573), contemporary of St. Thomas of Villanova, alumnus of Alcalá de Henares and professor both in Alcalá and Salamanca, when Copernicus's work (*De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*, 1543) was still found in the Index of Forbidden Books. The earth was no longer the center of the universe or of the solar system. It moves around another.

In the same spirit, St. Thomas of Villanova, heir of a medieval theocentric tradition, together with the great Spanish mystics, most of whom passed by Salamanca, were the first great modern thinkers together with other precursors of René Descartes, such as Huarte de San Juan.³⁶

What do we mean by modernity or modern? For this occasion, I will cite the late Paul Ricœur in his reflections on "Die Geschichte Selber" (On History Itself): "Modernity is itself... a global historical phenomenon, to the extent that it apprehends modern times as new times; this apprehension can be reflected only in terms of the ever-increasing distancing of expectations with respect to all experiences up to today. This was not the case with the eschatological expectations of historical Christianity, which, given their ultra-worldly status, could not be coordinated with common experience within a single historical process. The opening of a horizon of expectation designated by the term 'progress' is the prior condition for the conception of

³⁵ G. Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans. M. Harari (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 1-31.

³⁶ Cfr. E. Bullón, *De los orígenes de la filosofía moderna. Los precursores españoles de Bacon y Descartes* (Salamanca, 1905).

modern times as new, which constitutes the tautological definition of modernity, at least in German.”³⁷

In light of this, St. Thomas of Villanova, who lived in an age of crisis and clarification in Spanish mysticism because of the many heretical schools centered on techniques of prayer and contemplation in the path to the union with God,³⁸ was modern because without leaving his theocentric and eschatological mindframe or context (with which critics have characterized or defined the middle ages forgetting the theological question of the classical ancient period in Greece)³⁹ he made possible in his works, together with the other great Spanish mystics, the emergence of the modern subject. His period was a period of recollection, greatly inspired by the Franciscan School and of which Fray Luis de León and Teresa de Jesús were great adherents. However, both St. Thomas of Villanova and St. Alonso de Orozco did not become recollects and remained with the “observantes.”⁴⁰

Modern philosophy, which historians would conventionally trace to Descartes’s revolutionary thinking, emphasized the emergence of the subject as the main coordinate or pole of all intentionality in relation to the objective horizon of the world, of the cosmos. Man was the primordial universe or cosmos or world to be explored. The freedom from a rigidly theocentric and even eschatological or ascetical focus or centrality through an anthropology, especially a mystical anthropology as is the case of St. Thomas of Villanova, was truly revolutionary. It opened the self as the intentional center, something that Husserl would later on develop in his phenomenological career,⁴¹ within this horizon. Villanova’s theory of the self or the center of the soul links

³⁷ P. Ricœur, *Memory, History and Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey & D. Pellauer (Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 297 pp.

³⁸ Cfr. M. Andrés, *Los místicos de la edad de oro en España y América*. Antología (Madrid: BAC, 1996), 75ff.

³⁹ Cfr. W. Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947).

⁴⁰ M. Andrés, *Historia de la mística de la edad de Oro en España y América* (Madrid: BAC, 1994), 399.

⁴¹ Cfr. above all: E. Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations. An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. D. Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960).

him with the primitive Augustinian tradition – especially in the light of the famous text “Noli foras ire: in teipsum redi; in interiore homine habitat veritas”⁴² – (the notion of self and interiority)⁴³ and with other great mystics of the Augustinian order.⁴⁴

In the case of a Christian mystic, the self was the starting point of a dialogal relation with the Absolutely Other who was no longer just the Other, but the One with whom Communion was possible in alterity, in otherness, in freedom. The modern liberation of the subject, in the words of an author, “opened up a way of encounter, of the encounter, which is the birth of the subject.”⁴⁵ The birth of the modern subject in the Spanish mystics took place at least half a century of the publication of Descartes’s *Discours de la Méthode*.

The modern subject, just like Descartes, has a personal history.⁴⁶ The Spanish mystics, in particular St. Thomas of Villanova, opened up this personal history as an experiential path, a spiritual path of initiation, of mystagogy, of communication. Thus, there is a convergence of rational subjectivity (ownership of the experience) and communication (initiation into the experience).⁴⁷ In the words of Michel de Montaigne “I am (*je suis*) the material of my books.”⁴⁸ As Hegel would put, it this experience or principle

⁴² St. Augustine, *De vera religione*, XXXIX. Also: *Enarrationes in Psalm. XXIX*, 2, 10.

⁴³ Cfr. My interpretation on the self and interiority from the Augustinian philosophy of religion: *Augustinus, Homo Religiosus* (Manila: San Agustín Museum, 2005).

⁴⁴ M. Morales Borrero, *La geometría mística del alma en la literatura española del siglo de oro. Notas y puntualizaciones* (Madrid: UPSA-FUE, 1975), 394-395.

⁴⁵ D. Vasse, *L'autre du désir et le Dieu de la foi* (Paris: Ed. de Seuil, 1999), 17.

⁴⁶ R. Descartes, “Discours de la Méthod, Pars I” in *Descartes, Oeuvres et Lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953), 27.

⁴⁷ Cfr. on this regard the interesting reflections of J. Habermas, “An Alternative Way out of the Philosophy of the Subject: Communicative versus Subject-Centered Reason” in, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Twelve Lectures*, trans. F.G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998), 294-326.

⁴⁸ M. de Montaigne, “Essais” in *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1962), 9.

of experience contains the conformity and union with the certainty of one's self.⁴⁹

Love and the Philosophy of the Theological Centrality in Anthropology

Philosophy is love or friendship with wisdom. Love is both *eros* and *agape*: the driving force and the sharing, as Benedict XVI has recently reminded us.⁵⁰

First of all, let us discuss the center of the soul or the center of man which has already opted for God or is centered on God in contemplation and union. How is this centering on God achieved? By means of love. Love for God means opting for God, the Cause and not for the creatures or the effects. This is truly a metaphysical point of departure.⁵¹ Love, as St. Augustine says, will lead us to our goal: "Amor meus, pondus meus... My love is my weight. It will bring me where it wills."⁵²

⁴⁹ G.W.F. Hegel, *Enkyklopädie*, pr. 7 in *Samlichte Werke*, Vol. III

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (Vatrican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2005).

⁵¹ In what follows, I have taken into consideration the interpretation and presentation of M. Andrés: "Del centro, desnudo de imágenes y de las criaturas, brotan las potencias del alma, como la luz sale del sol. Desde esta concepción se entiende lo que significa llegarse el alma a sí misma, entrarse en sí, subir sobre sí, el tocamiento de Dios a la sustancia del alma y su acción en ella al bañarla de sus gracias sin que ella haga de suyo nada para recibirlas. Dios hiere al alma desde su más profundo centro, pues estando él en la esencia y sustancia del alma, como autor de la gracia, desde allí habla y enamora y hace actos subidos de amor. La perfecta contemplación o unión con Dios, siendo una, sin embargo es diversa en el modo de comunicarse, de forma que apenas se hallarán dos santos tan parecidos que pueda el uno ser regla segura para gobernar o documentar al otro.

A veces "centro" recibe otro significado: que Dios es el centro del alma, como la tierra es el centro de la piedra. El alma se encuentra en lo más profundo de su centro, cuando estando en gracia, le ama con toda su fuerza. Santo Tomás de Villanueva, los codificadores de la mística del recogimiento, San Juan de la Cruz y otros muchos autores usan ambos sentidos. El centro tiene grados hasta llegar a lo más profundo. En cada uno el Espíritu Santo embiste y hiere más al alma.", *Historia de la mística*, 29.

⁵² St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, XIII, 9.

St. Thomas of Villanova proposes the center of the soul,⁵³ following Augustine,⁵⁴ as the superior part of the soul and the locus of the potencies or faculties of the soul: intellect, memory and will. It is from this center that these faculties emerge “como la luz sale del sol... or as the light emanates from the sun.” These faculties are anthropological coordinates of man already transformed in spirit or in the Absolute. These faculties assure man of being in his true self, his true center. It is in this center that the soul or man should enter. In doing so, he enters into his substantial depth, his center, his very essence where God dwells, where the transcendent Absolute is present in the immanent and intimate level. As a locus, the center is where the Absolute and man meet. This is what we could call *the metaphysical and ontological dimension* of the centrality of the soul. It is the center understood in the fundamental sense or as a base of subjectivity.

On the other hand, St. Thomas of Villanova also understands and conceptualizes the center of the soul in a teleological sense or dimension, which we could label mystical and spiritual. This teleological sense means that God is the goal of man. This teleological sense is processual. It speaks of process, the centrality of the process, the goal of the dynamic activity of man in his true self or subjectivity. This process has for its starting point that God is the origin of all the good which drives man towards God Himself. God made everything beautiful in a hierarchically arranged universe.⁵⁵

⁵³ An excellent text on the centrality of the soul which we cannot take into consideration in the present study is Villanova's *Sermons on the Assumption*.

⁵⁴ Cfr. How Augustine speaks of this as “mens” and how he qualifies “mens” as “Imago Dei”, *De Trinitate*, XV, 7, 11.

⁵⁵ Writes St. Thomas of Villanova: “Pongo un ejemplo en los bienes gratuitos y dones que de Dios recibimos, como es un ánima puesta en gracia de Dios, la cual se considera cuán hermosa criatura y apuesta es, y de esta consideración sube a considerar, por consiguiente, todas las otras perfecciones que en ella puso Dios, como es la sabiduría y la fortaleza, etc.; de do sube hasta subir de grado en grado desde la más mínima criatura puesta en gracia hasta el mayor de los santos y ángeles; y la Virgen María, y la misma benditísima ánima de Jesucristo.”, *De Lección, Meditación, Oración y Contemplación*, II.

Both dimensions compliment each other for both dimensions speak of the base and the process which is metaphysical and mystical (spiritual) at the same time within the subject vis-à-vis the Absolute.

Love, specifically “el amor de Dios... love of God”, is the key to understanding this doctrine. This love is “caritas” which Villanova himself personally lived as a preacher,⁵⁶ as a friar, and as Archbishop. He was “tesorero de los pobres” or treasurer of the poor.⁵⁷ He was a pelican, giving his own blood to feed his young.

This lived charity or charity made concrete, but with its foundation in the love of God, is the key to understanding our author’s notion of *caritas*, of his own lived or experienced or mediated existence hinged on the Supreme Real principle that *Deus Caritas est*.

In speaking of the love of God, St. Thomas speaks of three coordinates: a) the reason as to why God must be loved (*por qué se ha de amar a Dios*) or the ethico-moral coordinate; b) how God must be loved or the path of making this love concrete (*cómo se ha de amar*) or the spiritual coordinate; and c) how this goal is to be achieved (*cómo podrás alcanzar su amor*) which is the mystical coordinate (the union with the Mystery as a goal).⁵⁸

This anthropology on the center of the soul becomes the basis of a metaphysical and theological discourse.⁵⁹ Commenting on the first commandment, “Amarás a tu Dios sobre todas las cosas, amarás al Señor Dios tuyo... Love your God above all things, love the Lord your God,” our mystical philosopher affirms that God has to be loved because he is “tuyo” or yours. This implies an intimate

⁵⁶ Cfr. A. Cañizares, *Santo Tomás de Villanueva. Testigo de la predicación española del siglo XVI* (Madrid, 1973).

⁵⁷ Cfr. F. de Quevedo, “De la milagrosa vida del bienaventurado fray Tomás de Villanueva” en *Obras de D. Francisco de Quevedo Villegas* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1951), 58-69; V. Capánaga, *Santo Tomás de Villanueva (Semblanza biográfica)*. (Madrid, 1942); V. Escribà, *Tomás de Villanueva, arzobispo del Imperio* (Valencia, 1941).

⁵⁸ *Sermón 2º sobre el amor de Dios*.

⁵⁹ What follows is an interpretation and exposition based mainly on *Sermón 2º sobre el amor de Dios*.

and immanent possession of God who is in the center of the soul. And yet this God is transcendental, above all things “le amarás por sí, y amarle has por sus cosas, y amarle has por ti... You should love him for Himself, for His effects, you should love Him.”

St. Thomas of Villanova goes to the very core, the very secret, the very essence of the Absolute who is “muy amable” or most loveable. Why is He loveable in Himself and in the Supreme Degree? Because he is “bueno, deleitable, provechoso... por amor... He is goodness, pleasure, helpfulness, for love in itself.” Here Villanova makes an enumeration of the Divine attributes which are not mere traits of God, but are identifiable in the Supreme degree with God Himself. If one is virtuous or if one is truly a man (virtue is derived from *vir* = man) then man loves God because God is good. “Si eres virtuoso, ama a tu Dios porque es bueno: si quieres deleites ámale porque es dulce; si eres codicioso, ámale porque es provechoso: no hay por donde te puedas excusar de su amor... If you are virtuous, love for your God because He is good; if you seek joys love Him because of He is sweet, if you are desiring, love Him because it is advantageous: There is no excuse for not loving Him.” In other words, you cannot escape from God’s love. This is metaphysically impossible, though man may opt for another kind of love, which Villanova calls “amor mundano” (worldly love).

God is the “sumo bien” or Supreme Good. Goodness is the diffusiveness of all reality. It is the principle of all reality in its becoming. It is the principle of being as it becomes real. Here we hear echoes of Plato’s *agathon* and even of Aristotle. For the former, *αγαθον* was metaphysical as it was the primordial idea in the world of ideas, as for the latter *αγαθον* was ethical or practical.

“Sumo bien” signifies Charity or love that is diffused or shared. We must recall the scholastic adage: “Bonum est diffusivum sui.” Charity is not the Good that illumines the Platonic world of ideas. Villanova was above all a Christian and an Augustinian. Charity, since it is from God, is transcendental and yet becomes concrete and present within a Christian context when it becomes a lived experience through concrete acts. This metaphysical starting point has a mystical realization when God allows Himself to be experienced as He is, in His transcendence by man.

Divine Experientiality in Charity: Metaphysics and Mysticism in Convergence

Such that man could exclaim: “¡Cuánta es la majestad suya, cuánta su bondad, cuánta es su gloria, cuánta su potencia, cuánta su sabiduría, cuánta su plenitud, cuánta su suavidad, cuántos sus deleites, cuánta su luz, cuánta su perfección, cuánto, finalmente, el cumplimiento de todos sus bienes y de todas sus cosas que se puedan desear!” Indeed, how great are all of his good effects, his creation which are all good and therefore desirable because of their goodness which proceeds from Him. And in the case of man, God allows Him to reciprocate, to respond, to correspond.

The only means to respond to the metaphysical and transcendental goodness of God in His majesty, goodness, glory, etc. is by means of “caritas” (Charity) or the love that is shared, love that is never frustrated. Thus, man, by a mystical and spiritual process, widens his experiential horizon: “Ensancha tus senos y extiende tus afectos... broaden your breasts and extend your affection because that majesty, that goodness, that blessedness widens your charity and all your desires.” And this goodness, this majesty, this blessedness is that which is directed or paired with those who love God. Thus, this love is above all just. It is the just reward for those who respond freely to God’s love.

St. Thomas of Villanova is careful to insist that God’s love is infinite and that there is an abyss between this Infinite love with the finite love of the creatures: “Puesto que es él nuestro afecto, comparado a aquel abismo de todo bien, como una gota de agua comparada al gran mar océano... He is our affection compared to that abyss of all good, like a drop of water compared to the great ocean.”⁶⁰

⁶⁰ In another relevant text, St. Thomas of Villanova writes: “Bien ciertamente es muy contrario el amor de estas criaturas si no fuere muy verdaderamente dirigido en Dios y por Dios, de tal manera que queramos a Dios de por sí y a sus criaturas por Dios; porque, si así no fuere, será el amor mundano tan contrario a nuestro fin deseado y paradero del cielo, como la liga en las alas del pájaro para poder volar, o como la cadena y maza a la mona, o como el cuerpo muerto que detuvo el cuervo para que no tornase al arca de Noé. Y por el contrario, el verdadero amor de Dios es fin de todas nuestras obras, en el cual consiste la perfección de la vida contemplativa.”, *De Lección*, II.

Our author further explains: "...porque sobrepuja todo sentido y todo deseo su infinita gloria, su infinita hermosura, su infinita lumbre, su infinita claridad; la cual aun no es comprendida con nuestro deseo, figura de lo cual fue aquella corona que cercaba de toda parte el propiciatorio en el *Sancta Sanctorum*... Because His infinite glory, His infinite beauty, His infinite light, His infinite clarity goes beyond all our senses and our desires."

Man, as a finite creature, is basically a being of desire. Desire qualifies him as a teleological being tending towards the good. And the good in itself is God, in all of His infinite attributes, which, as the text just cited states, is incomprehensible because it goes beyond the limited frontiers or capacities of our senses and desires. God's goodness is the *Sancta Sanctorum*, the holy of holies in Hebraic usage, which only the High Priest could enter once a year and where the ark of covenant was kept. It signifies the transcendence which is present in the immanence of man's finitude and yet unreachable, yet beyond. It is accessible. It is experientiable. It is present. Yet unreachable, beyond, with an infinite abyss separating us from it.

Theological Criteriology of Villanovan Anthropology

In order to understand what has been presented, it is imperative to remember that, for St. Thomas of Villanova, God is the center of love (*centro de amor*). He alone is worthy of being loved for Himself, by whom everything and to which everything is made. Love (*amor*) or Charity is the key to all this. Everything is made because of Charity. Charity is love in its Supreme and Divinized form which is the very essence, the very center, the very heart of love and the very power behind the creation of everything else.

God, who is Charity in itself and in its Supreme Degree makes possible that all creatures be carried by the weight of love. Here we find St. Augustine's influence. But St. Thomas's explanation is original. From Villanova we learn that God allows every creature to be carried by the weight of love because it is convenient to love only God in Himself. And from God we can love the rest.

It is worthy of note that Villanova affirms that God is only "un centro de amor... a center of love." This means there are other centers of love. Definitely, for our author God should be the only center of love. But being the realist he is, St. Thomas admits that there are many objects of love which can be reduced to two: God and the creatures, the Infinite and the finite. So much so that if there are many objects of love, there are also many perspectives and criteria of love.

Only the love of God is transcendent and infinite. It is the only acceptable criteria and perspective of love. If one loves others or the creatures or the cosmos, not out of the love of God, then that love, according to Villanova, is only in vain: "De aquí es que si alguna cosa se ama, la cual por El no se ama, vanamente se ama."

Actually, with this presentation, St. Thomas of Villanova is telling us that we have to make a choice of perspective of love: love from the point of view of the Creator (which is transcendental, universal and infinite) called by our author "bien increado" or Uncreated Goodness or that of the creatures (which is finite, limited and purely immanent and therefore a failure from the start) and labeled by our author as "bien creado" or created good. God is the source of all love. God is Supremely loveable in Himself: "Tan amable es Dios, que de todas las cosas, aun de las insensibles, en su manera es amado; porque ¿qué cosa son las inclinaciones de las cosas naturales, sino unos amores con los cuales son llevadas hacia su Dios?" In other words, aside from insisting that God is the source of love, our author affirms that inevitably we all tend to love God. We are all brought back to God. Everything participates in God, the source of all being, the source of all love.

Charity as Gravity and its Eschatological Consequences: From the Augustinian Analogy to Villanovan Criteriology

This source of all love is the center, the weight, the axis, the gravity of all things. By employing the lightness of fire (*ligereza en el fuego*), St. Thomas of Villanova, using the classical Augustinian analogy, explains that everything, by love, tends to its sphere: "¿Qué es la ligereza en el fuego, sino un amor que tiende

a su esfera?" "Ninguna cosa se desea sin amor... Nothing is desired without love." Love is the gravitational pull. Love is the force of the realization of one's nature, of one's desirous nature, of one's essence characterized primarily by desire. St. Thomas of Villanova affirms the centrality of love by alluding to the "natural apetito de bien en las cosas... the natural appetite towards the *bien* in all things" which he identifies with "el amor de Dios... the love of God." Our author also laments that often times that man does not reach that unchanging good, which is God, but instead remains in the inferior level of the "bien participado" or participated good, which is not goodness in itself, but only participates (*participare*) or takes part.

After affirming, following the long Christian anthropological tradition, the rationality of intellectual creatures, namely God and the angels, St. Thomas affirms the dignity of rationality which for him consists in the capacity to reach the Supreme Good which they desire ("pueden llegar hasta el sumo bien que desean.") This becomes the hinge on which Villanova interprets the classical Augustinian adage that love is the weight of the soul. It is the weight because it is the center, the criteria, the force that brings the soul or man, in as much as he is a living and rational creature, to his end, to the object of his desire. This end or object is determined by the criteria, the center. "Y asi como el peso lleva a la piedra al centro, así el amor lleva el ánima a su centro... Thus just like gravity or weight brings the stone to its center, in the same way love brings the soul to its center." And who is this center? "God."

God belongs to the center, the summit of the hierarchy of desires (ethical dimension) and hierarchy of values (axiological dimension) of man (from a psychological or facultative and anthropological or structural perspectives). This convergence of ethics and axiology in the experiential dimension of both psychology and anthropology constitute the metaphysical dimension of the question of the centrality of God in St. Thomas of Villanova.

However, God does not only belong to the center, but is the very center of man. Here metaphysics compliments spirituality and mysticism because if God is the very center, this means that in His transcendence God is present in the immanent expe-

riential center which is man in his rationality and intellectuality, which in turn form the basis of his being a creature of desire, by which St. Thomas of Villanova, categorizes man as a teleological being with a theological and even eschatological dimension.

This eschatology is based on nature itself. St. Thomas of Villanova points to the example of a stone in nature. From the stone we can learn that we have to go towards our center, to the very gravitational center with its pull, with its force of attraction. And this force is love which for Villanova is always "amor de Dios" or "caridad." Only in this love for God can man find his "descanso" or rest. This "descanso" or fulfillment, just as God rested on the seventh day, is identified with the center: "Cuanto ésta (the stone) más puede, se da prisa a bajar (go down or gravitate) y buscar (search) su descanso (rest)."

In effect, *gravitation* and *searching* are two sides of the same coin. They are two dimensions of the same movement towards one direction which is the "centro" or centro. Gravity is the force pulling a body to the center of the earth. Love, analogously, is the force that pulls the soul to its center: to the criteria, object and center of its love, which should be God. Villanova insists in a path that would be free of all disturbance. Only in this center can rest be found: "Y si alguna cosas se le pone entre medias que la quiere estobar, con todas sus fuerzas la echa de sí y procura que su camino no sea estorbado, por que finalmente vaya a su reposo y descanso."

All obstacles, all false loves would be removed in a spiritual process (transformation or perfection of man as spirit), rooted in the Mystery (mystical) and directed towards the transcendental in itself in person (who is God and so is therefore metaphysical or theological in direction). These same obstacles would crash with the force of the stone, especially a "peñasco" or a big stone, when it falls towards its center. Because of this, St. Thomas of Villanova prays that all obstacles that would block him from reaching the center be destroyed. This excellent preacher and zealous lover of the poor who was a sublime theologian, master of spirituality and contemplative philosopher, appeals to man's rationality and intelligence. He appeals that man exert all efforts to undo all things that would block him from reaching

God, the true center. These obstacles are all cosmological loves, which compared to God are inconsequential, finite and even false... if taken in themselves. They only possess truth and value only from the viewpoint of the experienced love of God in Charity. Charity is not just a theoretical principle. It is an experienced principle translated into a dynamic and spiritual process metaphysical in direction and rooted in the Mystery.

The Cosmological Implications of the Most Fundamental Philosophical Lesson: Sin and True Love Beyond the Flesh

The world, the cosmos, the totality of all created beings are all centers of love. They should be loved and yet they could inhibit man, if loved in themselves, from learning how to love. As philosophers, as lovers of wisdom, from St. Thomas of Villanova, we could learn the wisdom of genuine loving. His message is a call to learn how to love. We must learn how to love correctly. We must learn to love with wisdom or wisely. We must learn the wisdom of love which is the perfection of philosophy or the love of wisdom. There can only be true wisdom if we learn how to love from the viewpoint of God, if we love everything and everybody, even our enemies, from the perspective, centrality and criteria of God. He cannot understand how man could be drawn to other centers of love without going to the genuine center of love which is God.

In his beautiful and incomparable sermon about the love of God, the mystic Archbishop of Valencia writes this somewhat anguished prayer: "¡Oh mi buen Dios!, ¿y cómo puede ser que toda ánima por vos creada no se vaya a muy gran priesa a vos, sino que veamos que, suspensa y colgada de un poco de viento, sea privada de tanto bien y huelgue y descanse? ¿Cómo es posible que alguna criatura, capaz de vos, no se vaya hacia vos cuanto pudiere, centro infinito, infinitamente bueno y, por consiguiente, infinitamente atractivo?... Oh my good God! And how is it possible that all souls that you created do not quickly to you (take note he speaks to God as "vos" not with the familiar "tú"; St Thomas of Villanova, despite the great intimacy with God and his familiarity with the language of the liturgy, is aware of the presence of Mystery and thus uses the majestic plural "vos")

but we see that hanging by some winds, he is deprived of good and rest? How is it possible that a creature, capable of you (man is metaphysically structured with an experiential or mystical and spiritual capability towards God) does not go to you when he could, Oh Infinite Center, Infinitely Good and consequently Infinitely Attractive?"

Sin is the great obstacle. Sin is the choice of the creatures over God or loving the creatures or the cosmos or the entire ontological plane without the perspective and centrality or criteriology of God. To love the entire ontological range without God is to deprive ontology of metaphysics and of mysticism. It is ending with being or even the abstraction of being in itself without the transcendence behind being in itself which makes itself present in the realm of being.

St. Thomas of Villanova thinks that it would be a greater miracle or a stranger phenomenon if man does not save himself, if man does not reach God. This is a even far greater wonder than the great rocks or mountains would hang in suspense in the wind. It is not a wonder, an enigma but not Mystery, especially in the sense we understand this term. Mystery is that which is reserved to the transcendental presence within the immanent, implying the whole person in the path of the spirit. The path of the spirit is necessarily soteriological. It is Mystery because of its transcendence. Therefore, it is mystical and not just a mere wonder or enigma or aporia.

The flesh is called by our author "ingratísimo velo" or "ingrate veil." It covers our true self. It serves as an obstacle. St. Thomas of Villanova would not call it illusory. He admits its reality and its dire consequences. He admits its aesthetic or function in perception and knowledge. However, such function is subordinated to a greater spiritual end. The flesh should rediscover its true purpose in letting the soul go to its true center who is God. The flesh should be loved not in itself but in as much as it was given to us for God for the greatest pleasures that could only be attained in Him: "¿Quién me tiene que no te rasgo con mis propias manos, para que me vaya a ver mi Dios y goce de El y en El descanse? ¡Oh de cuán grandes placeres y de cuánta bienaventuranza carezco por ti... What would restrain me if I do

not tear you with my own hands, so that I would go to see my God and enjoy Him and rest in Him? Oh what great pleasures and blessings I lack because of you my flesh.”

To live in the flesh is for our mystic a “gran destierro... a great exile.” Death could only mean the end of this exile. Death is freedom. Death is the eschatological door to reach the union with God. It is not that this life is meaningless nor is the flesh in itself evil. If this life is not lived with God as the center and if the joys of the flesh are not enjoyed from the perspective and centrality of God, then everything is sin, everything has no value. This would be false love. This would not be true love which is the “love of God” or *αγάπη* or *caritas* or charity.

St. Thomas of Villanova’s greatest philosophical lesson does not consist in reminding us that philosophy is love of wisdom, but in reminding us of the wisdom of love, the wisdom of the love of God, the wisdom of *caritas*. Charity is only possible if we love everything, without exclusion, because of its metaphysical goodness from the experiential perspective of He who is the source of all good: God Himself, the Real of Reality and the Reality of the Real.

St. Thomas’s modernity consists in this perennial lesson on charity and its metaphysical and mystical foundation which is, paraphrasing Augustine,⁶¹ ever ancient and ever new. □

⁶¹ St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, X, 27, 8.