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Rediscovering *Sapientia* in an Age Riddled by *Scientia*:

Prophetic Knowledge in Thomas Merton

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Abstract

Our age is one characterised by a progressive outlook to life, one that invites us to succeed, and hence to become what society deems as successful. But this success, as times are molding history into society's aspirations, is being revealed to be more as one reaching to itself, with no real end than itself, as a success for the sake of success. This is bringing many to a sense of unreasonable absence or loss, one that, in spite of having everything, there is still something missing, unnamed.

This study treats primarily of this structure of feeling in the sense of attempting to give it a voice formative of an expressive hope. Using an interdisciplinary approach to an understanding, this study sheds light on various aspects of this age, one characterised by research, science, and technology; but a peculiar understanding is given by placing all this in the light of God's Wisdom, Whose ways are not our ways,[1] and the quality of an intimate relationship with Him, essentially through the life and writings of Thomas Merton, someone who is considered by many as a prophet to this age.

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[1]   cf. Isaiah 55:8

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I thank my tutor Rev. Dr Charlò Camilleri O.Carm. for all the lectures he delivered throughout the course and his expert guidance especially in Mystical Theology, which were crucial to my developing ideas concerning the interior life, especially in relation to all that is happening in a world driven by progress, technology and science. Some of his ideas, which he passed on and sustained throughout the course, were pivotal to this dissertation. I also thank the Carmelite community at Mdina for organising formative seminars, lectures, study groups and even open us their library to consult their collections of texts.

I thank my wife for all the support that she gave me throughout, and the sacrifices that she made that I may be able to dedicate time to read, reflect and write. I also thank my brother in Christ Nicholas Balzan with whom I could share and discuss most of the ideas put forward in this dissertation. Finally, I thank all those who in many ways made his work possible.

To my child

Declaration of Authenticity

This dissertation is the result of my study, and to the best of my knowledge and belief contains

no material written by another person except where due reference has been made.

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Jonathan Attard

Introduction

The Object of the Study

In our contemporary world, different peoples from different walks of life, religions and cultures, are all the more being drawn by various forces into a common maelstrom, often disguised by an *almost* presence, called my many as 'Progress,' that is increasingly permeating the diverse aspects of peoples' lives, be them intellectual or religious, educational or vocational, communal or familial, social or individual, and so on. There was no time in history as nowadays where such a rapid movement, in the holistic understanding of man, made itself powerfully present in such a way. Opposite to the belief that domineered the middle ages, nowadays, all that is past and traditional is almost without question considered as inferior to that which is being innovated in the lab, the sciences that are breaking new grounds, and the technologies that are being built from scientific outcomes. The *spiritual* drive of this age is expansively thrusted in a forward direction towards a future that looms in the far-reaching promises made by this Progress, which is being perceived as an all-in-all by many. Without any doubt, this drive brought with it an innumerable amount of benefits in the lives of people, casting off certain mythical ways of thinking that were later considered as obstacles to a reasonable and empirically true understanding of certain life phenomena; this, especially by the scientific disciplines and their related movements.

The problem with this progress-iveness towards a true understanding of things has always begun when it started becoming The Way of understanding all life, when it became a force in its own right that started rejecting past traditions and religious values in search of a truth outside of all that is, the fruit of a past, as if everything that was traditional and mythical is no longer valid in any way to the present age, and everything that offered no scientific proof could not be trusted let alone believed. But when one looks closer to this problem, one starts to

realise that this is strictly not a problem of modernism and the emerging sciences. In what is seen as diametrically opposing this progress, religion, the root of the same problem we can also identify in its spiritual propulsions when they too become a problem. Whereas progress is future-oriented, tending towards considering inferior all that is past, relying predominantly on detached conceptual reasoning, especially scientific reasoning that is grounded in empiricism, religion, historically was, and still is to an extent, considered as antiquity-oriented, tending towards a strictly traditional or biblical understanding of life as the only way to God, sometimes looking down at progress as if it is itself the threat to the religion in question. In this view of things, one commonality that I believe is root to the problem of both progress and religion, which will be explored in detail in this study, is generally a lack of authentic grounding into an initiating and ontologically sustaining tradition. From the point of view of progress the term 'tradition' feels quite dangling, as one almost never places the words 'tradition' and 'progress' in the same sentence. However, for the sake of a distinction, here we can consider traditions that are universal, such as those passed on through family generations, the religious upbringing, the educational system, and one's own national-religious heritage. From the point of view of religion the term 'tradition' is synonymous, and is best exemplified by religious traditions such as the Franciscan, a tradition that was born out of a charism, fully embodied by its founder St. Francis, or the Carmelite tradition, whose members were first gathered together on Mount Carmel in their imitating Elijah and Our Lady, both hallmarks of the charism of contemplation.

By distinguishing the universal from the strictly religious traditions, I am in no way considering them as separate from one another, but am instead aiming to bring them together in the context of the problem, to argue forward the possibilities of lack of grounding from their respective positions, and to bring into focus the core problem that I believe is common to both. What appears as a common root to the problems, attributed to the diametrically opposed progress and religion, is a kind of a hidden, justified short-sightedness that conscientiously

prevents one from facing and recognising the truth and purpose of the matter in question - whose essentiality cannot be grasped - to a preference of focusing on what can be grasped and explicated in relation to that same truth and purpose of the matter, mistaking the truth of the previous for the expressiveness of the latter. Therefore, in this sense, one can either become consumed by a restless search for an illusory truth outside his very own initiating and ontologically sustaining tradition, attributed by a lack of grounding caused by an inordinate momentum of 'progress,' or become consumed and preoccupied by the rigours of a faithful adherence to one's initiating and sustaining tradition, attributed by a lack of grounding caused by an inordinate momentum of 'religion.'

The Aim of the Study and Outline of Chapters

The aim of this study is to principally analyse and shed light on the peculiarities of an inordinate momentum of 'progress', whose effects can be described as an experiential riddle characterised by an excess of knowledge, and related processes, or what is going to be termed as an over-glorification of *Scientia*. This is going to be explored in increasing depth from general to core perspectives, to a final interpretation by the life and writings of someone who lived a contemplative life, with evidence of much fruit; the end goal, however, is to bring out possibilities, as relevant to this age, of living a life grounded in wisdom unending, one, whose qualities have long been forgotten behind the riddle, to taste of it again and to give it back its centre: Wisdom, or what is going to be termed as *Sapientia*. As already argued forward in the previous section, the roots of an inordinate momentum of 'progress' must be the same as those of an inordinate momentum of 'religion', and for this reason, a final interpretation of the riddle, as reaching to *Sapientia*, is going to be made through someone who sought to resolve, for himself and others, an inordinate momentum of 'religion'. But not only that, this person, by witness of his followers and most substantively by his writings, is believed to have gracefully

transcended these root problems of inordinacy, also articulating such personal journey by the strength of his contact with *Sapientia*. This person is none other than Thomas Merton (1915-68), a mid-twentieth century Trappist monk, who is also considered by many as a prophet to this age. Merton, apart from having spoken extensively about a life of contemplation and wisdom in the monastic context, he also spoke of these in a way possible for people living in the world, bringing new light to the problems they face in a society obsessed with progress. The way of an interpretation through Merton, therefore, is going to be based both on what he directly expressed, but most importantly on his prophetic journey as leading to an encounter with *Sapientia*.

The first chapter is going to treat of the dominant perspectives of this age, the way we are shaped to think and judge, especially from the viewpoint a society that is increasingly basing itself on an excess of knowledge, and related processes. The aim of this chapter is to bring to light the driving motives and weak points of such perspectives. The second chapter, then, is going to take core elements from these perspectives and study them from the point of view of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, terms deriving from the generic terms of knowledge and wisdom. The aim of this chapter is to bring out the different colours of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* in the form of core aspects, from historical moments as contributory to an understanding of their current movements. The third chapter, then, is going to treat of Thomas Merton, first giving an outline of his journey of growth, then providing an interpretation of such journey around the tensive poles of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, also shedding light on the relationship between these, as lived and understood by Merton. But this relationship is going to be explored by a third element, that of prophecy, most especially as witnessed to by Thomas Merton. Finally, the fourth chapter, is going to bring elements from all previous chapters to form a synthesis of hope that can lead us into a life of inexpressible wisdom, to an enduring encounter with *Sapientia*.

Method and Approach

The method used in this study is both hermeneutical and phenomenological, or what Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur calls hermeneutic phenomenology. "Phenomenology becomes hermeneutical when its method is taken to be interpretive"[2] rather than descriptive. To an interpretation of this age, it required reading into using first-hand observation, multi-disciplinary literature, spiritual texts, and most importantly the direct yet hidden experience of a modern-day mystic, Thomas Merton. Methodologically, especially in moving to a final interpretation, this dissertation relied principally on Mystical Theology understood as "a realm inaccessible to understanding, as an unutterable mystery, a hidden depth to be lined rather than known; yielding itself to a specific experience which surpasses our faculties of understanding rather than to any perception of sense or of intelligence."[3]

The approach used in this study is one of a progressive deepening into the object of the study, starting from a most abstract interpretation of this age and ending by an experiential interpretation of it, until finally informing a synthesis as reaching to the set aims. In fact, the chapters, as outlined, are going to start by first outlining the dominant perspectives of this age, then moving to core elements informing such perspectives, then moving to a living interpretation of such perspectives, essentially through the life and writings of Thomas Merton, and the qualities of a prophetic life he modelled. Finally, then, in a pyramid-like form, elements from the three chapter *stages* are going to be taken together to inform a final synthesis of hope as it can make a way through in this age.

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[2] "Phenomenology Online » Hermeneutical Phenomenology," Phenomenology Online, accessed May 20, 2017, http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/orientations-in-phenomenology/hermeneutical-phenomenology/.
[3] Vladímír Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Cambridge: James Clarke Ltd., 2005), 7.

Merits and Limits

One of the main contributions of this study I believe is its managing to bring together the various multi-disciplinary strands to shed light on a single focal point for an interpretation, the one underlying, hidden yet pervasive factor of this age: the riddle of *Scientia*. The task undertaken, however, probably left much to be desired with regards to other important areas that could have been included, given the vastness of history and the various perspectives surrounding *Scientia* and *Sapientia*. Therefore, the first limit is surely the extensive amount of literature surrounding the object of study, from recent studies on technology and science, and their impact on society, to philosophical perspectives on this age, to historical perspectives surrounding *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, to the vastness of mystical literature, to the extensive amount of literature surrounding Thomas Merton himself. Moreover, choices have to be made in each and every step of the way, most especially when it comes to determining the perspectives as informing our age (chapter 1), and the core aspects surrounding *Scientia* and *Sapientia* from history (chapter 2). Surely, there will be other valid perspectives and aspects that could have been contributory to a finer understanding of the object of our study. Finally, given the limited time, I could not read the whole of Thomas Merton collection and surrounding literature, but relied primarily on reputable Merton scholars like Lawrence S. Cunningham and William H. Shannon for a quality read-through of Merton and relevant literature.

Concluding Remark

Last but not least, this study, apart from proceeding in way outlined above, is also going be reflective of my own journey of faith, as interiorised and reflected upon, especially while preparing for this study. Being a person with a background in the sciences, also working in technology, this is all the more for me an expression of what was totally unknown to me some three years ago, a reality I was yearning for but which previously took for granted. Therefore,

I just wish that this will not just be an academic work, but also an opportunity of an encounter with He who can only be known by encounter.

Chapter 1

The Dominant Perceiving Structures of this Age

1.0 Entering the Experience of Contemporary Society

The experience of a society can be thought of as the sum of the experiences of its members compounded together, a collective happening that changes unremittingly along the ages, both consciously as well as circumstantially. Broadly speaking, this can be looked at as being both the offspring of times past as well a living fabric largely circumscribed by such past, or, as a body of conscious engagement making its headway in the wrought patterns of its history, hand in hand with natural progression. The actual essence of what makes such an experience, however, cannot but remain hidden to itself, and therefore, fully understanding it is in reality an impossibility. Nevertheless, along its developmental path, it leaves trails and marks that are revealing of its essence, pointing to the formation of certain perceiving structures that are determinative of what society is being transformed into.

In order to glimpse into the experience of contemporary society, this study is therefore going to attempt to explicate some of the most dominant perceiving structures of this age. As primary themes I chose: 'An undisputable trust in research and innovation', which treats of how an unconstrained knowledge and innovation are inscrutably steering society in their own terms; 'The elusive character of technological progress', which treats on how technological progress is not neutral as a phenomenon, but is unforeseeably changing society in ways that are fragmenting it; and 'Metamodern sensibilities to a progressive and religious occupation', which treats to a relative understanding the progressive and religious experience of contemporary society from known historical categories.

1.1 An Undisputable Trust in Research and Innovation

Research and innovation are now becoming, more than ever, the core movements of governments and corporations that are claiming significant progress by their operations. It is no longer just a question of resources and human capabilities, but an incorporative orientation that strives towards the new and unexplored, thrusting everything to the better, to innovative success. The general perception of this age appears to be framed to think that what was and is will always be superseded by what is coming next, as if what we know and have now will no longer be reliable then. But the situation at hand is subtler than this, as it is reasonable that man always hopes for a better future, especially in view of his human condition. The issue is a certain drive that seeks to disconnect from the past in the hope of finding oneself anew in the future, in a kind of scientific certainty, which disregards one's own story of the past. Steven D. Smith alludes to this problem in the ambit of secular discourse, saying, "It may be that we can do science well enough within the iron cage of secular discourse, but when we try to address normative matters, we run up against a dilemma,"[4] and in a society needy of answers, dilemmas cannot be readily accepted. So rather than accepting and learning from a normative past and present in view of a hope of a better future, there seems to be the tendency of subverting the past, and hence the present, to redefine oneself by what the latest possibilities are making known to us.

With regards to the domain of research, it is becoming all the more indicative of this, especially by how universities are now distributing their research resources given funding pressures, to be more in conformity with national and continental progressive agendas. The humanities, in general, are more geared towards analysing and interpreting the vastness of data

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[4]   Steven D. Smith, *The disenchantment of secular discourse* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 25.

from a past, to give a light on the present, than to acclimatise in succession, by experiment, regions of knowledge never explored (attributed to the sciences). Clearly, in this regard, research funding is being thrusted much more towards the sciences than the humanities, discouraging research from the latter by disproportionately encouraging the previous.[5] But closely related to this is also the orientative view of innovation, which can be said to be what makes tangibly perceptible the scientific ideal. There are various definitions of this 'innovation orientation', as it is frequently called in innovation literature; Siguaw et al., after examining "the vast innovation literature to arrive at a clear definition of … [what is] innovation orientation,"[6] came to understand it as a knowledge structure comprised of "an ever-changing set of goals, cause-and-effect beliefs, and other cognitive elements that define expected relationships, behaviours, and actions for organisational members."[7] Therefore, it seems, that rather than innovation being the result of organisational cohesion, as is usually believed, it is more the reverse: that an 'innovation orientation' is what determines the shape of organisations. Jan Achterbergh et al. say that if "intelligence dominates [organisational] control [(over identity)], the organisation runs the risk of innovatism;"[8] and they describe such intelligence as the organisational ability to scan and keep up with the operative environment. But is not the knowledge structure described as 'innovation orientation' indirectly such intelligence in dominance? It is not an exaggeration thinking that, lack of innovative engagement by organisations could mean they will be soon out of business.

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[5] Hendrik Pinxten, "The Humanities Under Fire?," *Drunk on Capitalism. An Interdisciplinary Reflection on Market Economy, Art and Science* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012).

[6] Judy A. Siguaw, Penny M. Simpson, and Cathy A. Enz, "Conceptualizing Innovation Orientation: A Framework for Study and Integration of Innovation Research," *Journal of Product Innovation Management* 23, no. 6 (2006): 556-74

[7] ibid.

[8] Jan Achterbergh, Robert Beeres, and Dirk Vriens, "Does the balanced scorecard support organizational viability?," *Kybernetes* 32, no. 9/10 (2003): 1387-404 , doi:10.1108/03684920310493314.

Returning back to research, a similar dynamic can be seen at play. Given the expanse of technology in every sphere of life, more human resources are being required to work with a certain *technical* background, but not only that; they also need to be swift enough to adapt to the 'ever-changing set of goals', which requires them also to be intellectually adept. No better candidates can be found than in universities, more specifically from faculties fostering scientific knowledge. In fact, "innovation is increasingly based upon a 'Triple Helix' of university-industry-government interaction. The increased importance of knowledge and the role of the university in incubation of technology-firms has given it a more prominent place in the institutional firmament."[9] Given this tendency, universities are becoming less free to foster knowledge for the sake of knowledge, as they are increasingly being required to produce knowledge that can be applied with a palpable effect on society at large, such as with the cure of certain diseases, or the development of certain technologies, hence the emphasis on scientific disciplines. Therefore, although research has never been granted such a high status in general by society, it remains nonetheless mostly chained to its applicability. The vast majority of the knowledge it generates is also indirectly sustaining the 'innovation orientation' knowledge structure, which appears to be frantically running its course on its own. No one can really say what it is transforming society into, although we already feel that it is changing our fundamental values and diminishing the quality of our relationships.

'An ever-changing set of goals [and the progression of] cause-and-effect beliefs' cannot but have the consequence of also leading oneself away from oneself, convincing one to trust not in one's life story but in the permanent yet invisible knowledge structure that promulgates the latest explorations of the world, and this not by the power of rhetoric, but by tangible experiments that promise to close the divide between knowledge and reality. It requires its

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9   Henry Etzkowitz, "Innovation in Innovation: The Triple Helix of University-Industry-Government Relations," *Social Science Information* 42, no. 3 (2003): 293-337, doi:10.1177/05390184030423002.

believer to unroot and reroot himself every time it changes the version of its story, with the consequent effect of distancing him all the more from his personal story, also making such story seem nothing but a coincidence in time. This is only leading the masses to an undisputable trust in research and innovation, which conditions them to never question their good use and purpose. In fact, recently, it can be said to have been one of the factors that gave the leeway to the general public in Malta to start questioning long established values vis-à-vis abortion and euthanasia, with the masses on social media and television drawing all kinds of arguments invoking scientific and scholarly jargon, a jargon they blindly trust but barely understand.

1.2 The Elusive Character of Technological Progress

Research and innovation, discussed in the previous section, could not arguably have gained such a status, in relation to the perceived success, without the recent explosive growth that happened in the field of technology. In fact, considering the purpose of research and innovation, as that of gaining a sense of direction as to where or what the next thing to pursue might be, they could not have become so highly acclaimed in contemporary organisational structures without the technological tools that aided innovation,[10] and the necessary technological means that could actually concretise their pursuits in relatively shorter times. Technology is effecting an acceleration in the closing of the 'innovating' cycle that is soon bringing organisations back to the drawing board to research and innovate all the more.

It is interesting that many definitions of technology, from the second half of the twentieth century, were formulated in relation to science. Back in 1966, in the journal *Technology and Culture*, Henryk Skolimowski argued that technology is different from science, in the sense that the latter is mainly concerned with what is, while the previous with

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[10]   Mark Dodgson, David Gann, and Ammon Salter, "The role of technology in the shift towards open innovation: the case of Procter & Gamble," *R and D Management* 36, no. 3 (2006), doi:10.1111/j.1467-9310.2006.00429.x.

what is to be.[11] A few years later, Herbert Simon, similar to Skolimowski, viewed "the scientist ... [as] concerned with how things are but the engineer with how things ought to be.[12] Conversely, Mario Bunge argued for the view that technology is applied science, since it "is an action heavily underpinned by theory."[13] This tensive dilemma between both poles seems to be that, whether technology increases as a result of scientific development or not. As we will see, the relationship between science and technology appears to be more determined by the makeup of the fabric of society, with the different potencies for each (science and technology) at particular moments in time, and by how they affect and transform such fabric.

With the passing of time, more technology is getting to serve as a backbone to human activity, and this, with increasing possibilities of use. Society can now be unarguably called a 'Technological Society', as philosophers Jacques Ellul (1912-94 AD) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979 AD) already had referred to it decades ago. But they had called it so less because of staggering technological breakthroughs than the character of technology itself, which they perceived, in their time, as unforeseeably changing society into a fragmented whole. In fact, they did not see the phenomenon of technology as itself the problem, but certain other forces of disorientation accompanying the phenomenon, forces that were gaining increasing power over central societal values, something that in traditional societies was not so powerfully present. Thomas Merton was greatly helped by these philosophers to "see the problem of making prophetic communication relevant to modern, technologized humanity,"[14] as pointing to the actual character of technology is still very elusive today, although everyone is all the more sensing the effects of its presence. Ellul, in *The Technological Society* says:

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[11]   Maarten Franssen, Gert-Jan Lokhorst, and Ibo Van De Poel, "Philosophy of Technology," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, February 20, 2009, accessed January 12, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/technology/.

[12]   ibid.

[13]   ibid

[14]   Ephrem Arcement, *In the school of prophets: the formation of Thomas Merton's prophetic spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2015), XXIV.

> To analyze these common features is tricky, but it is simple to grasp them. ... The great tendency of all persons who study techniques is to make distinctions. They distinguish between the different elements of technique, maintaining some and discarding others. They distinguish between technique and the use to which it is put. These distinctions are completely invalid and show only that he who makes them has understood nothing of the technical phenomenon. Its parts are ontologically tied together; in it, use is inseparable from being.[15]

Here, Ellul, indicates that the use of technology cannot be analysed in its own right, by focussing on particular technological aspects or relative elements, as technology cannot be separated from the character of society; its use is not essentially the cause of technology but the manifestation of a society with technology at its disposal. Marcuse, similarly, says that, "essentially the power of the machine is only the stored-up and projected power of man."[16] But one may rightly ask, 'What makes modern society different then from traditional societies?' It seems, that, technological advance was not an important movement in traditional societies much as in our society, and that technological growth was a very slow paced process then compared to now. The exact answer to this question cannot be given, but it seems that change have come about by the concurrence of various forces coming together, creating a single force strong enough to allow for such a great transformation. Ellul sees the eighteenth century as particularly incipient for such a change, saying:

> The optimistic atmosphere of the eighteenth century ... created a climate favorable to the rise of technical applications. The fear of evil diminished. There was an improvement in manners; a softening of the conditions of war; an increasing sense of man's responsibility for his fellows; a certain delight in life, which was greatly increased by the improvement of living conditions in nearly all classes except the artisan; the building of fine houses in great numbers. All these helped persuade Europeans that progress could only be achieved by the exploitation of natural resources and the application of scientific discoveries.
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> ... This state of mind created, in the second half of the eighteenth century, a kind of good conscience on the part of scientists who devoted their research to practical objectives. They believed that happiness and justice would result from their investigations; and it is here that the myth of progress had its beginning.[17]

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[15] Jacques Ellul, John Wilkinson, and Robert King Merton, *The technological society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 95.

[16] Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6.

[17] Jacques Ellul, John Wilkinson, and Robert King Merton, *The technological society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 47.

Ellul also gives an explanation to this by the conjunction of five phenomena, which he saw as having appeared together, which are, "the fruition of a long technical experience; population expansion; the suitability of the economic environment; the plasticity of the social milieu; and the appearance of a clear technical intention."[18] These are phenomena that in lesser combinations could have also been manifestly present in pre-modern periods, but which in part could not have gained enough strength to bring a complete technological transformation in society. Ellul believed that, it is only when these phenomena were present altogether that the right conditions were created for technology to have such a significant transformative position in society.

As already alluded to, these phenomena Ellul thought of as having coincided together in the eighteenth century; during this period, however, society "was not mature enough to allow the systematic development of inventions. ... Ideas proliferated but could take no final form until society had undergone a transformation."[19] This formative development was to come about in the following century by the close link that formed "between scientific research and technical invention."[20] Science was then "the determining cause of technical progress,"[21] but was not as yet much ruled by such progress. It was only "in the twentieth century [that] this relationship between scientific research and technical invention result[ed] in the enslavement of science to technique."[22] This seems to explain why the above given definitions of technology from the twentieth century were mostly formulated in relation to science. Much like 'innovation orientation', discussed in the previous section, is considered as a knowledge structure 'that defines expected relationships, behaviours, and actions for organisational members,' what can be said to have emerged in the twentieth century can also be correspondingly labeled as

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[18] ibid.
[19] ibid., 45-6.
[20] ibid., 45.
[21] ibid., 45.
[22] ibid.

'technology orientation', whose knowledge structure defined, and much still defines, expectant scientific research. Moreover, just as 'innovation orientation' has the tendency to project the view to society that what was and is will always be superseded by what is coming next, the same is being done by a 'technology orientation', by the increasing capabilities that it is giving to society at large. The various scientific fields are also continually being cross-pollinated with such increasing capabilities, and therefore, are being given more binding power in time to alter the perception of society of 'how things are' and 'what is to be'. Marcuse describes the cause-and-effect of technology in relation to its increase in capabilities as follows:

> New modes of realization are needed, corresponding to the new capabilities of society. Such new modes can be indicated only in negative terms because they would amount to the *negation* of the prevailing modes. Thus economic freedom would mean freedom from the economy-from being controlled by economic forces and relationships; freedom from the daily struggle for existence, from earning a living. Political freedom would mean liberation of the individuals from politics over which they have no effective control. Similarly, intellectual freedom would mean the restoration of individual thought now absorbed by mass communication and indoctrination, abolition of "public opinion" together with its makers. The unrealistic sound of these propositions is indicative, not of their utopian character, but of the strength of the forces which prevent their realization. The most effective and enduring form of warfare against liberation is the implanting of material and intellectual needs that perpetuate obsolete forms of the struggle for existence.[23]

In the light of what Marcuse said in the above, Ellul was right then when he said that it is wrong to perceive technique as something neutral, or as something that is under the control of man. Ellul says, that, the material and intellectual needs it creates are all needs subservient to the currency of technical efficiency. Denial of technique can easily be translated as a denial of efficiency, something that, nowadays, can threaten one's integration in contemporary society; internet use is one such example of this. In fact, where there is the possibility of more efficiency by technique, there will be the development of more technique, even at the cost of moral subversions. Inordinate consumerism and intellectual reductionism are both visible effects of such cost.

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[23] Herbert Marcuse, *One-dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society* (London: Routledge, 2008), 6.

Ellul and Marcuse saw this knowledge structure burgeoning decades before the ever transforming internet phenomenon. Ellul, in particular, saw two essential characteristics to technique, Rationality and Artificiality, which describe very well our dominant perceiving structure in relation to technology, especially the internet phenomenon and all ensuing development.

> This rationality, best exemplified in systematization, division of labor, creation of standards, production norms, and the like, involves two distinct phases : first, the use of "discourse" in every operation; this excludes spontaneity and personal creativity. Second, there is the reduction of method to its logical dimension alone. Every intervention of technique is, in effect, a reduction of facts, forces, phenomena, means, and instruments to the schema of logic.[24]

On a societal scale, one clear example of such rationality can be drawn from the management of social media. Social media is a systemised way of interaction providing one with the possibility of having a view of the whole world, also giving one the possibility to interact with anyone or anything in the world with maximum efficiency. But this it can give only at the cost of a severely reduced reality. It has the tendency of creating "an aura of intimacy whilst maintaining a safe distance,"[25] satisfying for people the only need that previously prompted them to make those extra steps to interact with others more directly and spontaneously. Alan Kirby in his book *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture*, says of Facebook, that it "is so well designed, ... that it can render almost invisible this process of electronic textualisation; for some, it becomes indistinguishable from actual friendship."[26] But not only this; it also has the tendency, more than any other preceding medium, to reduce the perception of reality of people, through its *discourse*, to that which it presents to them, not only consequentially but also systematically by algorithmic

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[24] Jacques Ellul, John Wilkinson, and Robert King Merton, *The technological society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 79.

[25] Erika Pearson, "All the World Wide Web's a stage: The performance of identity in online social networks," First Monday, , accessed January 28, 2017, http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2162/2127.

[26] Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: how new technologies dismantle the postmodern and reconfigure our culture* (London: Continuum, 2009), 122.

filtering and personalisation,[27] with the result of isolating users in cultural and ideological bubbles. Moreover, since society is all the more depending on social media, with all their newfound capabilities, especially their communicative rapidity and information ubiquity, people are no longer affording the time to verify and reflect upon the information they are encountering, by concern of missing out on what is happening elsewhere in the world. In general, people are more reacting than responding to information on social media. Reactive posts from politicians on Twitter are a clear example of this.

In the scientific world, a similar reduction can be seen happening, especially with the eventuality of more sophisticated instruments. Scientists, when by virtue of some new technology they come up with an instrument of exceeding potential, they also tend to create with it a certain hype which points to the explanation of certain *mystery* phenomena, typically seizing public interest. This is usually phenomena charged with ontological significance, such as that involving the human species (for example, with the cloning of Dolly the sheep[28]), aging, medicine, mental health, sexuality and even the existence of God (for example, with experiments at CERN's Hadron Collider[29]). By the increased capacity of novel technological instruments, new data from these phenomena, previously invisible, can be captured, casting off in the process any exposed *irrational* understandings surrounding them, to then enter into scientific discourse, typically reducing the phenomena to the logical dimension alone. These will be then reverted back to the public conventionally in skeleton and obscure responses, pointing only to logically possible answers, repressing, as a result, everything else about them that was deemed irrational. Therefore, similar to what happens with the social media, this

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[27] Engin Bozdag, "Bias in algorithmic filtering and personalization," *Ethics and Information Technology* 15, no. 3 (2013): 209-27, doi:10.1007/s10676-013-9321-6.

[28] Nature News, , accessed April 29, 2017, http://www.nature.com/nbt/journal/v18/n9/full/nbt0900_943.html - Cloning and its discontents— Canadian perspective.

[29] "CERN Accelerating science," The Large Hadron Collider | CERN, , accessed February 12, 2017, http://home.cern/topics/large-hadron-collider.

science-to-technology relation has the tendency of reducing the perception of reality to that which is possibly and rationally explainable.

Rationality, however, could not have arrived this far without the second essential characteristic, artificiality. The greater such rationality vis-à-vis reality, the greater the need becomes for artificiality (reduced reality). This hardly has to be explained nowadays with the prevalence of smartphones, which took the internet phenomenon to another level. Smartphones gave us the possibility to be connected with the world from anywhere and anytime, almost assuming celestial qualities. It is not an exaggeration if I say that it is hard to find some human activity which has not been penetrated by smartphones. Before I had to go to the bank to manage my finances; before I could not speak whenever I wanted to with my friends; before I could not continue with my business outside of office; before I could not watch television and read the newspapers whenever I desired to; before I could not read the Bible whenever I needed to; Today, everyone seems his own emperor over reality with such devices, but are they really?

Surely, it is a lack of understanding and wisdom that is blurring the fine line between technological artificiality and reality; in fact, this is what I sum up as the problem of our age with technology: when artificial reality begins to disguise itself as reality. As I already alluded to earlier, it is not technology that is the problem, and therefore, I also agree with Ellul when he says that technique cannot be controlled by some other technique. Given its irresistible forces, man must surely abide by an exceeding *non-technical* wisdom, that is, a wisdom that transcends all forms of control, for him to be able to use technology for his benefit. As Thomas Merton says in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, "It does us no good to make fantastic progress if we do not know how to live with it,"[30] and by this he could not but be implying such kind of wisdom.

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[30] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1989), 73.

1.3 Metamodern Sensibilities to both a Progressive and a Religious Occupation.

Every period ending in history begs for a title, or more accurately, a heuristic, descriptive of its dominant drives and changing perspectives that principally characterised it. Such a title, however, can never do justice to the richness of the period, as what is known and contrived remains always sketchy in relation to what really happened, though what really happened generally remains as an undercurrent in the periods following. For example, the period called modernity, though very unsettled as a term in history, even as to when it started and ended, was labelled so primarily due to having appeared questioning, and even rejecting, long-established institutions wrought in and by tradition, such as the monarchy and the Church; these were institutions formerly considered unquestionable and culturally very potent. "The distinctive discourse of modernity [was contrariwise] ... one of prediction and control,"[31] which resulted in the opening of radical new ways which lead to secularisation and progress, transforming societies in ways that were never in the past, hence the name given to the period. Though it is generally agreed by scholars that such period preceded the period we are living in, that is, postmodernity, what happened there still defines to debatable extents contemporary society. Postmodernity, marks the time of a growing distrust in the ideal of modernity, typically characterised by scepticism and even the deconstruction of such ideal. Albert Borgmann rightly says, that, "an epoch approaches its end when its fundamental conviction begins to weaken and no longer inspires enthusiasm among its advocates,"[32] which can be summed up as to what the postmodern ideal represents. But Borgmann, in his book *Crossing the Postmodern Divide*, published in the 90s, was still trying to understand the distinctive elements of postmodernism

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[31] Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the postmodern divide* (Chicago: University Press, 1993), 2.
[32] ibid., 48.

and the possibilities beyond it, what he calls the postmodern divide, and with an almost confused voice he said:

> The language of postmodernism has crucial critical force. But much of it seems idle; very little of it gives us a helpful view of the postmodern divide or of what lies beyond it. How can we hope, then, to find a discourse in which to explore this watershed and find our way across it?[33]

In our time, there are thinkers like Luke Turner[34] who are saying that the time we are living in is marking the end of postmodernism, giving way to another period which he refers to as metamodernism. But this is a name that is not exactly expressive of a period superseding the postmodern, but one that seems to be located in Borgmann's confused question. Turner describes metamodernism as the following:

> Whereas postmodernism was characterised by deconstruction, irony, pastiche, relativism, nihilism, and the rejection of grand narratives (to caricature it somewhat), the discourse surrounding metamodernism engages with the resurgence of sincerity, hope, romanticism, affect, and the potential for grand narratives and universal truths, whilst not forfeiting all that we've learnt from postmodernism.[35]

The term 'metamodernism' and its usage was first proposed by "Dutch cultural theorists Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in their 2010 essay, *Notes on Metamodernism*, spawning a research project and website of the same name, as well as numerous symposia and exhibitions, to which a diverse array of academics, writers and artists from across the globe have since added their voices."[36] In this essay they articulated metamodernism as follows:

> Both the metamodern epistemology (as if) and its ontology (between) should thus be conceived of as a ''both-neither'' dynamic. They are each at once modern and postmodern and neither of them. This dynamic can perhaps most appropriately be described by the metaphor of metaxis. Literally, the term metataxis translates as ''between''. It has however, via Plato and later the German philosopher Eric Voegelin, come to be associated with the experience of existence and consciousness.[37]

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[33] ibid., 3-4.
[34] Luke Turner, Luke Turner, , accessed February 16, 2017, http://luketurner.com/.
[35] "Metamodernism: A Brief Introduction," Notes on Metamodernism, , accessed April 16, 2017, http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/01/12/metamodernism-a-brief-introduction/.
[36] ibid.
[37] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin Van Den Akker, "Notes on metamodernism," *Journal of AESTHETICS & CULTURE 2*, no. 0 (2010): , doi:10.3402/ljm.v2i0.5677.

Following on such associations of metaxis, in an article they published in 2015 they describe metamodernism as a 'structure of feeling', citing British cultural theorist Raymond Williams, who said that it is as an "experience ... in solution,"[38] [which lies] "deeply embedded in our lives; it cannot be merely extracted and summarized. It is perhaps only in art – and this is the importance of art – that it can be realized, and communicated, as a whole experience."[39] In their own words they further elaborated on this by saying,

> a structure of feeling is a sentiment or, rather, still a sensibility that many people share, that many are aware of, but which cannot be easily, if at all, be pinned down. If this today, after decades of (post)structuralism and the quantification of the humanities, sounds vague, it is precisely what Williams intended: It is that element of culture which circumscribes it but nonetheless cannot be traced back to any one of its individual ingredients, that element which eludes, or is left after, structuralist analysis. The tenor of the structure of feeling, however, can be traced in art, which has the capability to express a common experience of a time and place.[40]

What strikes me as most important in the above is the tension they seem draw between what enslaves/mutes and what liberates/voices such a common experience, seemly formulated as structuralisation/quantification vis-à-vis art. The metamodern experience, oscillating between these terms, can thereby be formulated as the tension between the structuralisation of art / the quantification of the qualitative (modern sensibility), and art from the structuralised / the qualitative from the quantitative (postmodern sensibility).

From the point of view of technological progress, a metamodern sensibility can be located in paradoxes, such as that between the increasing demand for technological progress and the more enslaved/restricted we are feeling by its progressing, between an increasing technological consumerism and a decreasing *necessity* and sense for more technology, between an increasing communication capacity through social media and the soaring superficiality in relationships created over and by such media. It appears as though concomitantly, the modern

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[38] Raymond Williams and John Higgins, "Film and the dramatic tradition," The Raymond Williams reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 33.

[39] Raymond Williams and John Higgins, "Film and the dramatic tradition," *The Raymond Williams reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 40.

[40] Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin Van Den Akker, "Utopia, Sort of: A Case Study in Metamodernism," *Studia Neophilologica* 87, no. Sup1 (2014): , doi:10.1080/00393274.2014.981964.

impulse is working at controlling the *more* spontaneous and expressive while the postmodern

is attempting to make out a meaning out of the most numbing and forgetful control achieved.

Turner rightly says that, "Today we are nostalgics as much as we are futurists."[41] Interestingly,

with regards to science, he expresses this metamodern sensibility saying, "Just as science

strives for poetic elegance, artists might assume a quest for truth. All information is ground for

knowledge, whether empirical or aphoristic, no matter its truth-value."[42] Here, he is apparently

suggesting that knowledge, when assumed in the metamodern structure of feeling, tends to turn

more to itself in the domain of the opposite *other* for a semantic completion (as a relation

between signifier and signified), than to the fabric of truth (societal experience) in which it was

first conceived and intended. It is a semantic completion that quintessentially rests in

relativistic bubbles without claiming any roots. This proves to be very much so even by what

is happening in what is considered diametrically opposing progress, religion.

> As the nineteenth century drew to a close, traditional religion and its grand narrative were in general decline - a social reality captured by Friedrich Nietzsche's famous declaration, "God is dead". ... The conception of postmodernity ... rejected the grand narrative and, by extension, all transcendent narratives and mythic systems. The metaphysics upon which God, religion, and other paradigmatic models had rested was deemed discredited and so discarded. ... Today, however, as postmodernism gives way to the new 'structure of feeling' called metamodernism, the transcendent and archetypal impulse is seeing a resurgence. Myth and grand narratives are receiving a second look and, from a once-homed focus on *contingency* and *context*, interests in the 'timeless' and 'universal' are again finding energetic expression. Has transcendence become viable once more - has it been reconceived?[43]

Brendan Dempsey in his article *[R]econstruction: Metamodern 'Transcendence' and

the Return of Myth* interprets the divide between modernism and postmodernism in an

"immanent/transcendent paradigm,"[44] seeing it as representing a dual synthesis of art. The

modern artist grappled with a heightened sense of the immanent, hence the 'structuralisation

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[41] Luke Turner, "Metamodernist // Manifesto," The Metamodernist Manifesto (2011), accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.metamodernism.org/.

[42] ibid.

[43] "[Re]construction: Metamodern 'Transcendence' and the Return of Myth," Notes on Metamodernism, , accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/10/21/reconstruction-metamodern-transcendence-and-the-return-of-myth/.

[44] ibid.

of art', while the postmodern artist became highly preoccupied with the immanent, "with a world where nothing is 'out there', nothing can 'mean' anything," hence the 'art [or poetics] from the structuralised', or what he refers to as "the total collapse of the depth model."[45] But, a metamodern sensibility is recognising again the necessity of depth, a meaning that must be beyond, the possible existence of God, however including "both the postmodern condition of doubt and knowingness as well as a more modernist optimism. ... 'Theology' becomes a creative and exploratory act, done for the sensation of the thing itself within in the realm of immanence[, however, with the danger of] ... entertain[ing] the possibility of being converted to one's own invented religion."[46] Most interesting, in relation to this, is how Dempsey presumes an atheism to a metamodern sensibility, saying,

> However, metamodern mythopoeia never decidedly affirms or rejects the idea of the grand narratives of faith and transcendence. Indeed, it is precisely this ambiguity which allows for transcendent experience in the first place: metamodern faith must presume a kind of atheism if one is to have the freedom to create 'God'. But this fragile theism that metamodern religious conceptions generate never settles on a fixed perspective, never loses the malleability of art. It cannot ossify completely into characteristically naïve religious conceptions before it crumbles again under critical scrutiny back to atheism. Indeed, it is only within this dynamism that such myths can exist.[47]

Therefore, a metamodern sensibility to a religious occupation, although attemptive of transcendence above all controlled knowing, above unbelief, still finds itself crumbling by the least relativistic movement in a progressive occupation. The reason must be attempting transcendence in a vacuum, claiming a new hope (or wisdom) without roots.

1.4 The Fundamental Verity Underlying the Three Themes

In the previous thematic sections, one cannot not notice that in each came to light a certain falling away from the proper order of things. What I mean is, that, in essence, research and

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[45] ibid.
[46] ibid.
[47] ibid.

innovation are beneficial to society, just as is technology, and even religion. Therefore, it is not these, in themselves, that lead the perceptions of society to their fall, but principally the way society seems to idolatrise them. The tensive poles that emerged can be defined in terms of means and ends, and in these terms, such a falling away occurs whenever a means becomes an end for itself. Research and innovation, and technology, clearly, are leading in such a way, to the extent that they are all the more becoming a currency of success, and forces unquestionably revered by organisations and governments alike. From the bird's eye view of a progressive and religious occupation then, a metamodern sensibility is manifesting itself by structural detachment, in which *things* are finding balance among themselves relativistically off-ground, in the presumption that they must be rooted nowhere, seeing themselves as associated to no one and everyone at the same time (claiming a universality without roots).

This is only exacerbating the contradiction of a society seeing itself fully saturated by knowledge but having little to no wisdom for living up to such knowledge. Since this *kind* of knowledge implies different degrees of control, this study will be referring to it as *Scientia*. On the other hand, the unbounded wisdom required for living up to such knowledge, which does not, in the strict sense, require such knowledge, will be referred to as *Sapientia*. Since *Scientia* and *Sapientia* are very loaded terms in history, especially in the semantic spaces there are between science and religion, in the following chapter I am going to articulate some of their aspects as relevant to an understanding of their core movements.

Chapter 2

Defining *Scientia* and *Sapientia* in Historical Moments Contributory to an Understanding of their Current Movements

2.0 Reading into *Scientia* and *Sapientia* in their Greater Context

Coming to a definition of *Scientia* (scientific knowledge or just knowledge) and *Sapientia* (wisdom) is tantamount to defining *Scientia* in view of *Sapientia* and *Sapientia* as an impression of *Scientia*. *Scientia*, here, can be understood as the archetype of all signifiers, while *Sapientia* as that of all signifieds, the essence of what is, who is, or I am[48]. Broadly speaking, the characical difference between them is the creative tension that defines whatever was, is and will always be human, and this across all ages and cultures. This does not mean, however, that every signifier-signified relationship (tradition) is merely relative to others in space (different countries and cultures) and time (past, present and future), as from the beginning they all coexisted in one absolute order, which in history became itself a Signifier among signifiers, though it was, is and will always be The Signified of signifieds. The only harmonious way between *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, between signifier and signified, is the Signifier's way of The Signified, *Sapientia*, Jesus Christ Himself. The aim of this chapter is not to substantiate this relation but to define these tensive poles of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* in disparate sub-

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[48]   cf. Exodus 3:14

perspectives from history, however, in a way that is contributory to such an understanding of their interrelatedness and congeniality.

2.1 Defining *Scientia*

In approaching a definition of *Scientia* from a wide-ranging viewpoint of the term, one shall find many perspectives in history to consider for an interpretation of its movements. Therefore, to get to the character of *Scientia,* this study shall attempt to give a voice to many of these by considering marking historical moments, in the form of core perspectives, that appear to conjoin in enduring tensive movements, and which have shaped and still shape the landscape of the operations of *Scientia*. These core perspectives are, 1) the journey of its question from a primary philosophical *why* to an emerging mathematical *how*, hence a Philosophical *Scientia*, 2) its application in the natural world and its related effects on and by experience, hence an Empirical *Scientia*, and 3) the way it structures a living space of praxis to a religious occupation, hence a Religious *Scientia*.

2.1.1 Philosophical *Scientia*

In tracing the progression and impact of the various questions that surrounded *Scientia* in the course of history, this study is going to orient the meaning of the term around a turning point in the history of science, namely, the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth century that took place in Europe. The difference between what was before this moment and what was then lies primarily in the *way* of investigating and acquiring knowledge about the surrounding reality, natural and metaphysical. The distinctive elements of this difference find their roots in the orientation of causes and aims for doing *Scientia*, and consequently the different methods used for attaining to these. Before the revolution, "*Scientia* did not set out to get underneath or above observation, and did not set out to challenge or refine ordinary

descriptions of things observed. Instead, it sought to systematize ordinary qualitative observation and description, referring it to definitions *per genus et differentiam* that were no less observational than what they explained."[49] Here, "*Scientia* was knowledge of the properties of members of natural kinds based on knowledge of the essences of natural kinds."[50] The orientative difference that came after the revolution manifested itself in a *Scientia* that no longer regarded the question of essence in relation to natural kinds[51] as the most important for its ultimate aims. It was changed to one whose enquiry sought to relate essence "more with elemental things, notably matter in its more general forms."[52] In fact, "to have *Scientia* concerning celestial or terrestrial object was then to have knowledge of the motions, shapes, positions, and numbers of their parts. Explanations might invoke particles of matter that eluded observation, and might exploit both arithmetical and geometrical observation."[53]

Natural philosophy, that is, the study of nature, before the revolution, was in a sense Aristotelian in its way of reasoning. It proceeded with a "kind of understanding [that] consists in grasping natural processes in terms of the essential principles underlying them, and that these essential principles are to be found in the things themselves, for it is from the 'natures' of the things themselves that their behaviour derives."[54] Trigonometry for Aristotle is one such essential principle for example, an *epistêmê* that could explain the properties of various shapes. However, this kind of *Scientia*, tailor-made to derive an understanding of things from essential phenomena, certainly could be not be used for the explanation of most shapes wrought by

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[49] Tom Sorell, G.A Rogers, and Jill Kraye, *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), vii.

[50] ibid.

[51] Alexander Bird and Emma Tobin, "Natural Kinds," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, September 17, 2008, accessed November 29, 2016, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/natural-kinds/.

[52] Tom Sorell, G.A Rogers, and Jill Kraye, *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), viii.

[53] ibid.

[54] Stephen Gaukroger, Tom Sorell, G.A Rogers, and Jill Kraye, "The unity of natural philosophy and the end of scientia," *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 20.

nature, given the inherent hiddenness of elemental matter and forms (such as molecular structures) making up such shapes. Since most elemental matter and forms elude the naked, observing eye, they were naturally excluded as necessary premises for the study of natural phenomena. Therefore, it is clear that not all domains of knowledge could fit in for a theoretical study, given this tailor-made design. And it is here where the natural philosophers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century harshly criticised this view of *Scientia*, particularly due to the "the exclusion of particular domains from the theoretical sciences, and [also] the exclusion of phenomena on the grounds that they are non-natural processes."[55]

Francis Bacon (1561-1626 AD) was one amongst the first proponents of this movement. He highly criticized Aristotle's distinction between natural motions (consisting of natural processes) and violent motions (consisting of "artifacts and unnatural or constrained or violent processes on the other"[56]). Whereas Aristotle devoted natural philosophy to the study of "properties of the things in terms of their essences,"[57] Bacon argued that it should instead be the latter "the subject of natural-philosophical enquiry."[58]

> These include those unnatural processes produced by mechanical devices such as levers, pulleys, and screws; those strategic unnatural placements of stones that hold buildings up; those unnatural motions of bodies produced by artillery, and so on. These are the life and soul of artillery, engines, and the whole enterprise of *mechanics*. Note that Bacon is not concerned with the truth or otherwise of Aristotle's account here. His argument is that the whole investigation is beside the point, so questions of whether it is true are not are simply irrelevant.[59]

Essentially, Bacon's thrust for *Scientia* was for the changing of the most fundamental question it was asking: from _why_ things are the way they are to _how_ things are the way they are, from "the seeking [of] a contemplative understanding of natural phenomena ... to [the seeking of] an augmentation and amplification of human powers [with respect to nature.]"[60] Bacon argued

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55 ibid.
56 ibid., 21.
57 ibid.
58 ibid.
59 ibid., 22.
60 ibid., 23.

that in order that we control and constrain natural phenomena "we should be concerning ourselves with ... artificial processes,"[61] while also taking into consideration natural processes. "According to Bacon, man would be able to explain all the processes in nature if he could acquire full insight into the hidden structure and the secret workings of matter."[62]

From this changing view of S*cientia*, then started to emerge "the idea that there is a level of causation that is common to all natural phenomena, namely the microscopic level of atomic collisions,"[63] and "that mechanics contain the only explanatory resources available to natural philosophy, which effectively requires a reduction of natural philosophy to mechanics."[64] But possibly, it was not just the shift from essentialism to this kind of reductionism that lead to the collapse of the previous *Scientia*, but also that for accommodation. Whereas such reductionism "aim[s] at a single all-inclusive account of natural phenomena systematically in what can essentially be represented in a tree-like form which reflects supposed ontological and explanatory priority," accommodation aims at assembling tools/solutions that worked precisely well with respect to the locality[65] of a group of problems at hand (experimental mechanics). Accommodation rejects the idea of aiming at a global or universal tool/solution that can serve all (foundational mechanics); also, it does not concern itself with unifying tools/solutions in a particular causal order to one ontological point, though that is desirable on the grounds of economy. In other words, one would not want to have a specialist tool for each problem encountered, "but there is no rationale for thinking that one

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[61]   ibid., 25.
[62]   Jürgen Klein, "Francis Bacon," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, December 29, 2003, , accessed December 03, 2016, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/francis-bacon/.
[63]   Stephen Gaukroger, Tom Sorell, G.A Rogers, and Jill Kraye, "The unity of natural philosophy and the end of scientia," *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 27.
[64]   ibid., 28.
[65]   Note: The structural complexity of a particular group of problems as differing from other groups of problems.

might reduce them all to one basic tool."[66] This tension between experimental and foundational

mechanics is what lead to a further unification between natural philosophy (now submitted to

artificial mechanics) and mathematical thinking. Mathematical language is the only language

that could give both *local* relative correctness (experimental mechanics) together with universal

mathematical completeness (foundational mechanics) to natural philosophy, and therefore, it

was deemed imperative, especially by the Cartesians, that all artificial mechanics be then

explained mathematically. For an enduring definition of Philosophical *Scientia*, therefore, I

find best the following:

> The Cartesian claim is that, without the characteristics of clarity and distinctness, any
> purported explanation is impossible, because we cannot identify exactly what it is that is being
> proposed in the explanation. In other words, the lesson Cartesians draw from the past is that
> any reform of natural philosophy must begin with some precise criteria for what is going to
> count as a satisfactory explanation, and, whatever extra criteria might be introduced to deal
> with specific areas, these must hold generally in any kind of cognitive endeavour. This results
> in a unification of cognitive enquiry, and it turns out it is one with a mathematical model to
> the extent that mathematics embodies the qualities of clarity and distinctness in an archetypical
> way.[67]

2.1.2 Empirical *Scientia*

> The task of formulating an acceptable definition of the idea of an 'empirical science' is not
> without its difficulties. Some of these arise from the fact that there must be many theoretical
> systems with a logical structure very similar to the one which at any particular time is the
> accepted system of empirical science. This situation is sometimes described by saying that
> there is a great number—presumably an infinite number— of 'logically possible worlds'. Yet
> the system called 'empirical science' is intended to represent only one world: the 'real world'
> or the 'world of our experience'.[68] - Karl Popper

The empiricist standpoint for doing *Scientia* is one that fundamentally stands on a different

ground than that of the Cartesians (to which we culminated in the last subsection.) Empiricism,

particularly that emerging in the seventeenth century period of the early modern science, placed

a special emphasis on sense experience when it comes to possible knowledge about reality,

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[66] Stephen Gaukroger, Tom Sorell, G.A Rogers, and Jill Kraye, "The unity of natural philosophy and the end of scientia," *Scientia in Early Modern Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Thinkers on Demonstrative Knowledge from First Principles* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2010), 28.

[67] ibid., 30.

[68] Karl R. Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery* (London: Routledge, 2002), 16.

especially when reacting to the pure, abstract Descartian rationalism, also known as classical rationalism. In classical rationalism, the idea is that knowledge proceeds and can be justified purely by reason. The critical difference from classical rationalism, therefore, lies primarily in the understanding of how knowledge is conceived in the human mind. Classical empiricists sustain that all possible knowledge cannot but come from sense experience, to the extent of saying, that, no knowledge is possible in the human mind prior to any form of sense experience. For classical empiricists there cannot be any knowledge that is conceived innately, and that purely innate ideas are an impossibility. In relation to this, John Locke (1632-1704 AD), considered to be the father of British Empiricism, introduced "the concept of the 'Tabula Rasa' or the 'Blank Slate.' ... [He states that] we are born with nothing in our mind, just as an empty page upon which sense experience imprints ideas."[69]

There are two basic questions that empiricists ask with respect to any claimed knowledge: 1) How do you know? 2) What are the limits of knowledge? The first question is one for which an acceptable answer must refer to some sort of experience that one can clearly point to, an experience that can be repeated and even shared with others. In this regard, the Cartesian promulgations, those that are for a kind of reasoning that frames itself by qualities of clarity and distinctness attributed to mathematical thinking, clearly fail miserably, as these cannot but lead to abstract thought experiments that are disconnected from experience. Therefore, the early empiricists threw away all ways to knowledge that strive at framing an understanding of any sort in some fundamental structure of reality (metaphysics or mathematics), aiming instead at focusing on epistemology, on the question 'how do we come to know things?' This mentality helped significantly in laying the groundwork for modern science, that is, how science is generally conducted nowadays. The second question concerns

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[69] SisyphusRedeemed (a reputable YouTube name), Classical Empiricism and Logical Positivism (Part 4-1), August 19, 2010, accessed December 15, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlyBOcYUmts.

the limits of human knowledge; it seeks to understand the limits of the human mind. It asks, "what is [the mind] equipped to know? ... Why think that it can grasp grand metaphysical truths about the 'true nature of reality'[, if there are any]?"[70]

> One problem for empiricism is that it tends to lead towards various forms of skepticism, the view that we cannot have any knowledge at all. [It can generally lead to] External World Skepticism: since we only experience sensations, not the 'world itself' we can never have knowledge about the world; and Inductive Skepticism: since we only have experience of the past and present, but never the future, we can never know if the future will be like the past.[71]

This kind of skepticism, which typically reaches its highs when there is some rigid conformity to some ideology of empiricism, cannot be considered however all irrelevant to our study of *Scientia*, as in reality, even nowadays, when it comes to finding that drawing line which separates between what falls under the umbrella of empirical science and not, it is still not clear as to where to actually draw it. This typically varies depending on what justification of knowledge about something one believes can achieve scientifically, that is, by "construct[ing] hypotheses, or systems of theories, and test[ing] them against experience by observation and experiment."[72] I believe there are two main differentiated views with regards to this; one that subjects all reality to sense experience, via which then such reality is exclusively explored and determined scientific dis/approval, reflected more in the kind of empiricism introduced in this subsection; and one that differentiates between what is scientific and nonscientific as explanation, depending on the approach to explanation made with respect to the object being studied. The previous considers knowledge *only* to be validly true if it derives from scientific demonstration, subjecting all validity of knowledge to science, while the latter focuses just on the method of enquiring knowledge, ascertaining whether a method is scientific or nonscientific, and allowing the possibility for knowledge derived from either camp

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[70]   ibid.

[71]   ibid.

[72]   Karl R. Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery* (London: Routledge, 2002), 3.

to be either true or false. Karl Popper (1902-94 AD), a twentieth century philosopher of science, proposed some criteria for such a distinguishing; he called this *The Demarcation Problem.*

What Popper was interested in with regards to any theory, was, whether it is a scientific or not. To illustrate, I will use Einstein's theory of relativity, which is one of the finest examples for a scientific theory. It is not for its mathematical eloquence that it is so, nor because of its ingenuity, but because "Einstein went out on a limb and made a very specific, very radical prediction i.e. that massive bodies would warp space time and bend light."[73] But not only that! Years later, in 1919, "during a solar eclipse, Sir Arthur Eddington performs the first experimental test of [this theory.] ... The findings made Einstein a celebrity overnight, and precipitated the eventual triumph of general relativity over classical Newtonian physics."[74] Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996 AD) would say of this that it had enough potential to cause a paradigm shift in the scientific world;[75] other normal sciences continually happen within some long standing paradigm. Current physics, for example, still operates within the paradigm of relativity theory, despite it being some hundred years old. This, however, still does not raise such theory to the level of being an absolute paradigmal truth of science. In fact, it is considered to be a scientific theory precisely because of it stating in advance what results of observation are incompatible with its claims, and that, if any of these are falsified by contrary evidence, it could mean that the theory be overthrown altogether. Presumably, what Sir Arthur Eddington attempted was not confirmation but what Popper calls falsification.

> It should be noticed that a positive decision can only temporarily support the theory, for subsequent negative decisions may always overthrow it. So long as theory withstands detailed and severe tests and is not superseded by another theory in the course of scientific progress, we may say that it has 'proved its mettle' or that it is 'corroborated' by past experience.[76]

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[73] SisyphusRedeemed (a reputable YouTube name), Popper on Demarcation Science vs Pseudoscience (Lecture 6, Video 2 of 3), October 01, 2013, accessed December 15, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIXcg1rJn2U.

[74] Lizzie Buchen, "May 29, 1919: A Major Eclipse, Relatively Speaking," Wired, May 29, 2009, accessed December 16, 2016, https://www.wired.com/2009/05/dayintech_0529/.

[75] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (Chicago ;London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 66.

[76] Karl R. Popper, *The logic of scientific discovery* (London: Routledge, 2002),10.

> ... what characterizes the empirical method is its manner of exposing to falsification, in every conceivable way, the system to be tested. Its aim is not to save the lives of untenable systems but, on the contrary, to select the one which is by comparison the fittest, by exposing them all to the fiercest struggle for survival.[77]

Great thinkers like Marx and Freud thought of themselves as great scientists, but their most important theories failed this criterion of falsification, because "no matter what data was discovered, Marxists and Freudians *always* saw their theories confirmed."[78]   For example, if Marx asked: "Hate your job?" He would continue, "that's proof capitalism is alienating you." "Don't hate your job?" He would continue, "you've clearly been brainwashed by capitalism."[79] For this single reason, Popper, would consider their theories as pseudoscience, however, he would not go on to conclude that theirs are false theories. This does not interest him. He would just state that theirs are not scientific theories. Therefore, for Popper, one very important criterion that demarcates the scientific from the nonscientific is falsification, which is also what I find most suitable as a definition of Empirical *Scientia*.

2.1.3 Religious *Scientia*

In the world of the religious, *Scientia* takes on other colours, and differs in emphasis from Philosophical and Empirical *Scientia*. It particularly strives to give an account of what reality and actual life is based on charismatic knowledge (which includes the experience of faith, content from revelation and other human knowledge), also serving at providing visible reference points to those living their faith in the spirit of such charism. Religious traditions, by their very nature, can be considered to be like a concordance of such reference points, around which religious communities gather, communicate and breathe together. Therefore, Religious *Scientia* is more geared towards informing an experience of God and that of a community of

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[77] ibid., 20.
[78] SisyphusRedeemed (a reputable YouTube name), Popper on Demarcation Science vs Pseudoscience (Lecture 6, Video 2 of 3), October 01, 2013, accessed December 15, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIXcg1rJn2U.
[79] ibid.

faith than a mere understanding of or method to knowledge. The religious are more interested in an expressed knowledge of the Truth, to meet together and form communities in the spirit of such knowledgeable utterings.

Perhaps the most influential in the early Catholic world with regards to an understanding of such knowledge was Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD). He, "who was for nearly 1000 years the pre-eminent theologian of the Church, set out the method by which the reality of God may be known."[80] In his *Confessions*, "he described that true knowledge consists in the acquisition of, or the ascent of the mind to the truth (veritas) that is both 'immutable and eternal'. The truth is no other than God, who alone is both immutable and eternal."[81] Moreover, for Augustine, "all rational knowledge, including knowledge of God and of Truth, is dependent on revealed Truth. Rational knowledge requires revelation as its prerequisite."[82] He also believed, however, that knowledge about God and Truth cannot be really grasped in active thinking but mainly through passive intellectual illumination, wherein knowledge appears suddenly and without one's activity in the pondering mind, also described as the Eureka effect. Linked to this illuminative aspect, in Augustine, is the meditative aspect, which was understood in his time as the practice of having "the intellect turned inwards towards God."[83] Therein, one disposes himself in such a stance for the reception of any such illuminative knowledge. Therefore, for Augustine, knowledge about reality of God is general revelation conceived in passive illumination, however, through active engagement with Revelation as recorded in Scripture and lived in the Church. The only effort one can make is a willful effort of disposition, which must also be effected by Grace. Moreover, with regards to specialised knowledge such

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[80] Derek Seckington, *Divine illumination and revelation: The Augustinian Theory of Knowledge (*Australia: Beryl Seckington, 2005), 140.

[81] Julius Marcos, *St.Augustine's Caritas et Scientia,* 1, accessed December 23, 2016, http://sscrmnl.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Caritas-et-Scientia.pdf

[82] Derek Seckington, *Divine illumination and revelation: The Augustinian Theory of Knowledge (*Australia: Beryl Seckington, 2005), 140.

[83] ibid.

as that of languages, art, mathematics and sciences, Augustine believed, that, "if God is acknowledged, praised and loved as the ultimate source of this intelligence (cognitio)", such a person will be considered wise and reaching of *Sapientia,* "otherwise, ... [he] may be learned but not wise at all. (*Doctrina Christiana, 2.38.57*)"[84] More directly, in a different place, he also says:

> When the soul deserts the wisdom (sapientia) of love, which is always unchanging and one, and desires knowledge (scientia) from the experience of temporal and changing things, it becomes puffed up rather than built up. And weighed down in this manner the soul falls away from blessedness as though by its own heaviness. (De Trinitate xii, 11. Migne, PL 42:1007)[85]

Thomas Aquinas (1225-74 AD), another figure who highly influenced the Catholic world, also contributed much to an understanding of knowledge in relation to God. Whereas Augustine is mainly considered Platonic in his approach to knowledge, Aquinas is considered Aristotelian in this regard. In fact, given this association, "Aquinas is sometimes taken to hold a foundationalist theory of knowledge"[86] by contemporary philosophers, a foundationalism that is mostly associated with that of Descartes, although his originates from 'ancient and medieval' foundationalism, especially Aristotle. Stump in her article *Aquinas on the Foundations of Knowledge,*[87] argues for a dismissal of such foundationalism however, attempting a different interpretation of Aquinas' use of *Scientia* in his writings.

> A Foundationalist theory of knowledge is a theory which explains what counts as knowledge and what does not and which accounts for the trustworthiness of what counts as knowledge. But the theory of *scientia* [in Aquinas] is a matter of cognizing causes of things, of finding causal explanations for currently accepted claims.[88]

Also,

> Aquinas, who thinks in general that everything happens under God's providential control, supposes in particular both that God is the maker of human cognitive equipment and that God designed the equipment for the purpose of acquiring truth. Consequently, it isn't surprising to find him paying less attention to how we know we're not mistaken or deceived or how we

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[84] Julius Marcos, *St.Augustine's Caritas et Scientia,* 1, accessed December 23, 2016, http://sscrmnl.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Caritas-et-Scientia.pdf

[85] Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. "The recovery of paradise." *Thomas merton: selected essays* (Orbis, 2014)

[86] Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas on the Foundations of Knowledge," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. sup1 (1991), 125.

[87] ibid.: 125-158.

[88] ibid., 152.

keep from being in those undesirable states and more attention to how we use our cognitive capacities in gaining truth.[89]

With regards to *Scientia* Aquinas says,

> Suppose ... that someone where on the moon itself and by sense perceived the interposition of the earth by its shadow. He would perceive by sense that the moon was then eclipsed by the shadow of the earth, but he would not for that reason have full *scientia* of the cause of the eclipse. For what causes an eclipse in general (*universaliter*) is the proper (*per se*) cause of the eclipse.[90]

> Following the path on inquiry of discovery, human reasoning proceeds from certain things understood simply, and these are first principles. And, again, following the path of judgment [proceeding with the certitude of *scientia*], human reasoning returns by analysis to first principles, which it ponders once it has discovered them.[91]

In this presentation of *Scientia* as argued forward by Stump, Aquinas bases his reasoning on two fundamental principles; 1) that by virtue of God's ultimate creative design of man, we ought not worry about whether what we know a particular knowledge is true or not, so long as we desire the Truth, as God intended in us from the very beginning. Such worry is more the enterprise of "a Cartesian, rationalist 'deduction'."[92] 2) *Scientia* is the analysis into first principles not the discovery of things from first principles. Moreover, "there are things which we would not ask about with [any] doubt if we were to see them, not because *scientia* consists in seeing but because the universal, with which *scientia* is concerned, would be obtained by means of experience, on the basis of the things seen."[93] To clarify the difference by using the example of the lunar eclipse, "both the person who is on the moon watching an eclipse of the moon and the physicist who understands eclipses know that the moon is sometimes eclipsed (or is not eclipsed). But only the physicist has *Scientia* of that fact because only the physicist understands in general the causes of eclipses."[94]

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[89] ibid., 151.
[90] ibid., 153.
[91] ibid., 154-5.
[92] ibid., 154.
[93] ibid., 152.
[94] ibid., 156.

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955 AD) was a Jesuit priest trained in paleontology and geology, and is known mostly for his paradigmatic synthesis between Darwin's theory of evolution and The Universal Christ. He says, that, "this Universal Christ is the Christ presented to us in the Gospels, and more particularly by St Paul and St John. It is the Christ by whom the great mystics lived: but nevertheless not the Christ with whom theology has been most concerned. ... How vitally necessary it now is that that we should make plain this eminently Catholic notion of Christ α and ω."[95] On the other hand, he also speaks of science rather passionately, to the extent of saying in one of his texts: "all I shall try to do, ... is to make you love science in a Christian way."[96] To illustrate, I am going to show how he synthesised a view uniting Darwin's Evolutionary Theory, still very much controversial in Christian and even Catholic circles, with the Universal Christ.

The stark difference between such tensive perspectives, he joins in synthesis by the view of an evolutionary process as moving both forward and upward, and this in increasing complexity and consciousness. Reality evolved in time from cosmogenesis to biogenesis to anthropogenesis to Christogenesis, converging in what he calls an omega point. He says that, "a) the Christ of revelation is nothing other than the omega; b) as omega, Christ presents himself as reachable and inevitable in all things; c) in order to become omega, Christ through his incarnation had to pervade and animate the Universe."[97] Moreover, he says, that, "as a physicalist it is impossible for me to read St. Paul without seeing in a stunning way the universal and cosmic domination of the Incarnate Word."[98] He saw Christ's Eucharistic presence as the fruit of a Creative Union finally accomplished by the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ.

> Creation is, for him, a process of unification which begins with absolute multiplicity and end at the opposite pole where the unifying process of evolution eventually accomplishes the final

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[95] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Science and Christ* (London: Collins, 1968), 14.
[96] ibid., 21.
[97] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Mon univers* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972), 82.
[98] ibid., 84.

unification in the Omega Point, the ultimate cosmic term. The multiple has a negative meaning of the resistance that must be overcome by Creative Union.[99]

Though Augustine, Aquinas, and Teilhard are centuries apart in history, and the way they looked at knowledge or *Scientia* is very different, the great similarity between them lies in the way they recognized a God-given freedom of a creative space that necessitated their full active engagement in their seeking to know God more,[100] though God remains, in their view, the initiator and enabler of all such active seeking. In particular, however, what really characterises and informs a definition of Religious *Scientia*, as is indicative by the different examples of each, is the way they held onto the paradox of reality, between knowing and unknowing, activity and passivity, without siding, and therefore without negating any of the opposites, without negating the truth; also, by the way they were integrative of knowledge development happening in other specific intellectual disciplines. Such things they surely had to brave in the fiery epistemic tensions of their time. John Paul II, in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*, eloquently describes such a religious posture to knowing as follows:

> To assist reason in its effort to understand the mystery there are the signs which Revelation itself presents. These serve to lead the search for truth to new depths, enabling the mind in its autonomous exploration to penetrate within the mystery by use of reason's own methods, of which it is rightly jealous. Yet these signs also urge reason to look beyond their status as signs in order to grasp the deeper meaning which they bear. They contain a hidden truth to which the mind is drawn and which it cannot ignore without destroying the very signs which it is given.[101]

2.2 Defining *Sapientia*

In approaching a definition of *Sapientia* from a wide-ranging but Christian viewpoint of the term, three main perspectives appear to dominate as enduring movements in history that have shaped and still shape the landscape of its pursuit and disclosure. These are, 1) the

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[99] Agustín Udías Vallina, *Christogenesis: The Development of Teilhard's Cosmic Christology* (American Teilhard Association, 2009), 6.

[100] cf. Thomas Merton, *New seeds of contemplation* (London: Burns and Oates, 2003), 34.

[101] John Paul II, Pope. Encyclical Letter, *Fides Et Ratio,* of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II: To the Bishops of the Catholic Church On the Relationship between Faith and Reason., 12, accessed 20 December 2017, http://www.catholic-pages.com/documents/fides_et_ratio.pdf

universalistic, ordinary, everyday experience of people, as rising from natural happenings to their making and claiming of a life story, hence an Ordinary *Sapientia*; 2) God's revelation in the special story of a people, Israel, one whose culmination is Jesus Christ, in and by Whom all the world is saved, hence a Biblical *Sapientia*; 3) the experience of a deep loss best expressed by Christian mystics, one that suggests a beyond, a cosmic movement, a mystical experience, and this as is being experienced in this age, hence a Mystical *Sapientia*.

2.2.1 Ordinary *Sapientia*

In attempting to expound on *Sapientia*, or wisdom, from an ordinary perspective, I run the risk of being considered a fool, and probably am, however, no more fool than anyone else, but a fool nonetheless.[102] The reason being, that, ordinary wisdom is an inherent quality that is basic to each and every person, be them good or evil, intelligent or ignorant, one that has little to do with particular or extraordinary wisdom, such as that which is typically attributed to a few gifted people. Every person, or people, weaves their ordinary wisdom differently and according to their living contexts. Moreover, ordinary wisdom is a quality that can only be glimpsed into in the ambit of such contexts, as it can never be generalised or exhausted of its qualities, and therefore, cannot intelligibly level in full agreement among different cultures. In fact, "what passes as wise in one culture, one era, or one creed may, in another, be either sentimental twaddle or dangerous delusion."[103] This does not mean, on the other hand, that ordinary wisdom is something so inherently disparate or contextual as to be totally incomprehensible by outsiders, or one that does not participate in common truths. "Insofar as we can understand

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[102]   An expression taken from William Lowell Randall et al., *Ordinary wisdom: biographical aging and the journey of life* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 1.

[103]   William Lowell Randall et al., *Ordinary wisdom: biographical aging and the journey of life* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 2.

something of the wisdom [of others] ..., it is because we already have some wisdom within us, either potentially or actually."[104]

In history, and "as a virtue to which we ought to aspire, wisdom has [always] been cloaked in paradox."[105] In fact, as a philosophical ideal, wisdom was always portrayed as something beyond our reach. Socrates "in his defense speech [said that] human wisdom begins with the recognition of one's own ignorance."[106] Similarly, in religious traditions, wisdom is generally exalted as lost "in the impenetrable mists above the summit of human potential."[107] However, this only makes for ordinary wisdom a seeming contradiction, as its ordinariness seems to be not so ordinary, especially for the erudite seeker; does ordinary wisdom, then, only appear so for those who entrust themselves fully to the paradox, by the sole means of their life story (present and past), and in the larger narrative of their culture, or better, tradition (past and distant past), by which they abide and engage with others? In view of this informed question, ordinary wisdom appears to be more a "function of our life story ... that underlines for us the unbreakable bond between our story and our life, ... and since we all have - or, as we see it, *are* - such a lifestory, wisdom is thus an ordinary thing."[108] Of this, Kees Waaijman says, "stories are lived to the extent [that] they are a creative process in which heterogeneous events are collected and acquire an identity; and that the life becomes a story to the extent that it is more than a biological process."[109]

The phenomenon of people coming together in and around a tradition narrative is fundamental to an understanding of ordinary wisdom in history, especially in established belief

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104   ibid., 11.
105   ibid., 2.
106   Andrew Targowski, *Cognitive informatics and wisdom development: interdisciplinary approaches* (Hershey, PA: Information Science Reference, 2011), 41.
107   William Lowell Randall et al., *Ordinary wisdom: biographical aging and the journey of life* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 2.
108   ibid., 2-3.
109   Kees Waaijman, *Studies in Spirituality. Supplement*, vol. 8, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 924.

systems whose wisdom is/was by and large rooted in other-worldly dimensions. A few examples of these are: the Ancient Hebrews, by the way they identified themselves with their special story as a chosen people by God, and the way they were respectful of the law and the prophets in seeking to be faithful to their God of Revelation; the Buddhists, by the way they orient themselves around the Four Noble Truths and follow in the Eightfold Path of Buddhism, also in view of their belief in rebirth and reincarnation; the Taoists, in their belief "that to be wise is to realise one's unity with nature and to live in conjunction with nature's rhythm, the Tao,"[110] the way to eternal life; and in contrast to such belief systems, there were the early Greek philosophers, particularly Thales (624-546 B.C.E), usually considered to be the first Greek philosopher, who, "breaking with the mythological tradition that explained all nature in terms of gods, goddesses, and other spirits, ... [he] adopted what we might call a naturalistic outlook, a scientific viewpoint. ... His speculations were quite at home in the midst of the pragmatic explosion of innovation and technology, reflecting society's fascination with *techne*, the new way of looking at nature."[111]

Similar to the time of Thales, in our times, especially in the shift from a modern to a postmodern perspective (now also considered complete), fascination with innovation and technology was and still is doing away with God and religion and now, in a more drastic global dimension. In view of how this shift manifested itself, and the way wisdom was mediated, exalted and attributed divine qualities in history, it can be argued that, doing away with God and religion was also doing away with that living wisdom, and doing away with that living wisdom was also doing away with tradition narratives, and doing away with tradition narratives rendered all the more inaccessible the bond between our story and our lives, only leading to meaningless despair. In this light Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900 AD) came to the conclusion

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[110]   Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *A passion for wisdom: a very brief history of philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25.

[111]   ibid., 27.

that, "Christianity was from the beginning, essentially and fundamentally, life's nausea and disgust with life, merely concealed behind, masked by, dressed up as, faith in 'another' or 'better' life."[112] In this shift, religion, and hence God, came to be perceived nothing but an obstacle to life, and hence also to ordinary wisdom, which is the most basic and most recognised quality by each and every person. But one can also argue that there cannot be a culture without at least a narrative. It is clear, however, that even from how we came to regard aging as degrading, and the elderly as being of no use to our society, that narratives are no longer *old* and traditional in the sense of being wrought up slowly in time and experience.

Randall et al. give four reasons in this regard of "how wisdom fell out of favor,"[113] in line with the above understanding of ordinary wisdom. First, is the "coincidental movement of psychology to the analysis of behaviour as opposed to persons, and the movement of philosophy to the analysis of concepts and propositions."[114] Tending to empirical violence, these approaches have enough persuasive power to deny inherent facts if they cannot be objectified in their own terms. Wise people, "who are thought to deal with essences," however, are surely "opaque to a psychology whose attention continues to remain focused primarily on moving targets."[115] Although this is improving, there is still a long way to go. The second reason they give is, that, "in the transition from the modern view of science to postmodern views, it is becoming increasingly clear that, many ... scientists ... have attached meaning to - indeed live - a specific theoretical and methodological story, ... the scientific method story."[116] In this way, the scientific method, as a reporting narrative, becomes a dominant ontology, one, due to which other traditional narratives have to adapt, or risk being rejected altogether,

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[112] Friedrich Nietzsche and Walter Kaufmann, *The birth of tragedy ; and the case of Wagner* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 23.

[113] William Lowell Randall et al., *Ordinary wisdom: biographical aging and the journey of life* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 17.

[114] ibid.

[115] ibid., 18.

[116] ibid.

bringing many on the verge of meaningless despair. The third reason they give, deals with the relation between wisdom and age.

> The traditional linkage between wisdom and aging which seems to have characterized the thinking of may earlier civilizations has become something of a mockery in a technological era that finds little utility in the elderly and has elevated the notion of planned obsolescence to previously unimagined heights.[117]

Although this is linked with science, it involves more the personal metaphors of aging that are being brought in the professional context. "A professional may carry negative stereotypes of aging, which are then reinforced in the scientific climate [in discussion] ... . This can become a closed circle were things such as wisdom are not even considered a possible theme in the story of aging."[118] The fourth and last reason he gives involves the cultural perspective of science, or what is called by its lasting impact in society, scientism.

> We look to science for the answers to all of our problems. Anything that is less than scientific or not professed by an expert is suspect. Thus, knowledge that originates in the humanities, for example, or even in our own life stories is not to be trusted. Under these conditions, wisdom disappears as a legitimate topic of inquiry, since it does not lend itself to technical forms of knowledge and does not provide a quick fix, despite the claims of some contemporary New Age literature.[119]

In view of such an understanding of ordinary wisdom, as a definition of Ordinary *Sapientia*, I find most suiting the following: A wise determination, or a discerning attitude, that fosters wisdom by seeking to thrive heartfully over everything that tempts her to do away with her life story, especially by the indirect displacement of the tradition narrative by which she can be known. Ordinary *Sapientia* can therefore be described as the heart and order of personal and communal flourishing, typically sustained by the expression of one's life story in a tradition narrative (generally the aim of both religious and secular societies); at its very heart, however, it is one that can be recognised in others only if the one relating already has it in himself *affirming* his life story; by its very nature it moves towards transforming individuals into

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[117]   ibid., 19.
[118]   ibid., 20.
[119]   ibid.

persons, the collective into a community; it moves towards making and claiming a life story; it is an Ordinary *Sapientia* whose heart but transcends every story.

2.2.2 Biblical *Sapientia*

Wisdom, is a thematic spread in the Bible that takes on various shapes and forms in its essential exposition. It ranges from proverbial maxims to accounts of dealing with life's most pressing questions to wisdom's incarnate display in Jesus Christ, as *Sophos* and *Sophia*. But it was only recently that wisdom, as an entity, or as a category of literature, was given its rightful attention in biblical studies, especially in Old Testament literature. An early "negative assessment on wisdom arose because it was difficult if not impossible to fit her thought into the reigning theological system."[120] "The fact that there is almost no mention of Israel's cult or her salvation-history tradition [in what can be considered wisdom writings,]... has led writers on Old Testament theology to ignore or even denigrate it until fairly recently."[121] It is generally agreed by scholars that only a handful of Scriptures qualify as being dedicated to a direct treatment of wisdom, particularly those that deal with humanism and human experience. Scriptures such as Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes clearly qualify as such, and it is unanimously agreed by scholars that these be considered core of Israel's Wisdom Literature (WL).[122] Others, such as part of the Psalms, the Book of Wisdom and Sirach, are usually also considered as such, and more rarely the parables of Jesus and the books of James,[123]　however, opinions regarding these differ among scholars.[124]

> The role of wisdom in the ... [Old Testament] is better evaluated in the light of wisdom
> thinking, or ... the sapiential "understanding of reality" ... . It is not a question of direct

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[120]　G. Ernest Wright, *God who acts* (London: Scm Press, 1952), 104.
[121]　Ernest Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament.* Vol. 3. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 109.
[122]　Roland Edmund Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.* Vol. 13. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1981), 3.
[123]　Terence Y. Mullins, "Jewish Wisdom Literature in the New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature 68, no. 4 (1949): , doi:10.2307/3262103.
[124]　James Lee. Crenshaw, *Studies in ancient Israelite wisdom* (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976), 1-5.

influence of the sages or of wisdom literature, but of an approach to reality that was shared by all Israelites in varying degrees.[125]

WL is taken to be different in form than the Law, the Prophets and the history books of the Bible. It is reflective of "a particular strand of Israelite religion and culture."[126] In particular, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job form a triad of literature that revolve around the same set of questions, such as, 'What kind of a world we are living in?' and 'What does it look like to live well in this world?' Each of these books tackles these questions from a unique perspective, and it is imperative to consider them all together for a comprehensive biblical perspective on wisdom. Interestingly, however, Hebrew WL was found to be not totally unique in its content, as it appeared to be very similar in certain places to other wisdom texts from older neighboring cultures; Proverbs 22:17-24:22 and parts of the *Instruction of Amen-em-opet* of Egypt is one such popular example.[127] This particular discovery generated a lot of interest in WL in the early-mid twentieth century. "Its universalistic appeal [, due to such affinities, was] ... understood [by some] as an inherent deficiency,"[128] and even of devoiding Israel's WL of its revelatory content. But still, its unique signature remains in its centering of wisdom in the Lord; wisdom literature from other neighboring cultures generally drew their centre from sages and wise men.

> Ancient Israel, too, participated in the business of cultivating her experiential knowledge. That in doing so she stumbled upon perceptions largely similar to those of other ancient peoples is no longer surprising. What is surprising, rather, is that many of the most elementary experiences appeared quite differently to her, especially because she set them in a quite specific spiritual and religious context of understanding. But was 'reality', then, not one and the same?[129]

Early on in the Proverbs wisdom is given its centre in the Lord, stating that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."[130] After this,

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[125] Roland Edmund Murphy, *Wisdom Literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther.* Vol. 13. (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1981), 3.

[126] Ernest Lucas, *Exploring the Old Testament.* Vol. 3. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 79.

[127] Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 9.

[128] James Lee. Crenshaw, *Studies in ancient Israelite wisdom* (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976), 2.

[129] Gerhard Von Rad, *Wisdom in Israel* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 5.

[130] Prov 1:7 (RSV)

however, one finds no prophetic declarations or any special revelation typical in other Old Testament literature. Proverbs is mainly comprised of very humanistic instructions and maxims on how to lead one's life happily, fruitfully and at peace in the Lord, whose wisdom, theologically, can be considered as general revelation. In Ecclesiastes, on the other hand, though it still sees 'fear of the Lord' as the greatest wisdom like in Proverbs, it reflects mainly "on the tantalizing hollowness and brevity of life,"[131] prompting questions that Proverbs seems to pass over. Finally, in Job, the question turns on God, of whether he is truly wise and just in what he commands, particularly reflecting through an "enigma of calamities that are beyond control or explanation."[132] Job seeks an answer which God does not provide but illustrate by his declarative sovereignty.

In WL, all of the Law and Prophets are assumed without any effort to a philosophical system, to the extent that in the Hebrew culture it was out of the norm to challenge these. Asking about the meaning of life (questioning existence without a view of God), typical in the Greek culture, meant questioning God's revelation, something that was frowned upon by the Jews. The most perfect knowledge and highest of all values for the Jews was God's revelation. Culturally, then, their concern was how to apply themselves, in their real-life situations, to God's revelation; the perceived gaps between God's revelation and their real-life situations can be said to have been their creative tension that enlivened, deepened, adapted and generated such WL. WL reflects the cultural need to get to the issue of practical everyday living, and the effort to understand everyday matters that were open to interpretation or implicitly addressed in the Law and the Prophets, such as money, passion, raising children, finding a good wife (addressed in Proverbs), the question of whether life is worth living at all (particularly addressed in Ecclesiastes), evil and suffering (particularly addressed in Job), and more. But

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131   Derek Kidner, *The Wisdom of Proverbs, Job & Ecclesiastes* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 116.
132   ibid.

rather than just to deal with such matters of life, or even to survive them, the Jews perceived these as more of a tension between faithfulness and unfaithfulness in the presence of the Lord, especially in view of their special story as a people.

The key aspect to get to the core of Biblical *Sapientia*, that is, to the essence of WL, is therefore the "covenant relationship with God," "the revelation [of the Law] at Sinai," "Israel's special election" and "Yahweh's saving deeds for his people."[133] Israel received her sacred identity directly from the hands of Revelation, and here, she stands as a very unique nation, with her temple being most symbolic and centre of such sacred identity. Without Israel's special story, there could not have existed a reproductive Hebrew WL, and without a Hebrew WL there could not have been a living tradition so one with Israel's sacred identity.

In the Bible, until the coming of Jesus Christ, the spirit of *Sapientia* always yearned for transcendence from Israel's special story to the all-incorporating, boundless and always mysterious God of Revelation. It specially demanded a movement from law principles to personification, from obedience of the law to a personal relationship with God. In Proverbs 8, wisdom is depicted as a person crying out to a people, pleading with them to listen to the noble things she has to say. "One may assume that this street scene was suggested not by an encounter with a disembodied Sophia, but rather by the more common encounter with a sophos, a sage, a wisdom teacher. Much like Jesus and the Rabbinic schools, he would collect about him his pupils, through whom the sapiential tradition would be handed down from generation to generation."[134] But this sapiential tradition was not only a matter of handing itself down to coming generations, but also of reaching up in transcendence to its fulfillment in God. This opposite movement is already indicative of the coming birth of a new *Sapientia*, one that would

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133 James Lee. Crenshaw, *Studies in ancient Israelite wisdom* (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976), 4.
134 Robert Louis Wilken, *Aspects of wisdom in Judaism and early Christianity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), 2.

have appeared "in the world, and yet [be] separate from the works of creation."[135] At the appointed time, Ancient Israel's religion of the temple and *Sapientia* reached a point wherein by the power of the Holy Spirit they fused to transform Israel forever, breaking open the hidden and most sacred identity of the temple and revealing it in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Temple, both Signifier and Signified, human and divine, God Himself. Biblical *Sapientia* is therefore this mystery of Israel's special story opening up for all nations in Jesus Christ, as both *Sophos* and *Sophia*, particularly revealed in the Word of God and the way it is liturgically celebrated in His Body, the Church.

2.2.3 Mystical *Sapientia*

Karl Rahner (1904-84 AD), in his *Theological Investigations*, made an important statement, even more to our times: "The devout Christian of the future will be either a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all."[136] The term 'mystic' or 'mysticism' might sound odd to most Christians, even to Catholics, although the raisons d'être of Catholicism is mainly founded on the continual development of the oft hidden but publicly celebrated mystical life of the Church, especially through the life of Saints. The problem with an understanding of 'mysticism' in our times is not so much mystical experience as to the age in which it is being interpreted. Kees Waaijman attributes five notable periodical stages from early Christianity to a changing of understanding of the term 'mysticism', the last of which he ascribes to the twentieth century, where a reassessment of mysticism arose "from the psychology of religion, theology and history."[137]

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[135] John Day, R. P. Gordon, and Hugh Godfrey Maturin. Williamson, *Wisdom in ancient Israel* (NY: Cambridge University, 1998), 224.

[136] Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol.7, Further Theology of the Spiritual Life, trans David Bourke (New York, Herder and Herder, 1971), 15.

[137] Kees Waaijman, Studies in Spirituality. Supplement, vol. 8, Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 355.

Michel de Certeau (1925-86 AD), in his article *Mysticism*,[138] marks precisely this last shift of understanding of 'mysticism' as happening in about the first thirty years of the twentieth century. He makes reference to an "abundant output [of literature regarding 'mysticism' which] has included positions that are quite different, but ... [one that] seems to have in common the connection of mysticism to the primitive mentality, to a marginal and threatened tradition existing within Christian churches, to an intuition that had become foreign to the intellectual understanding, or better still, to an Orient where the sun of "meaning" would rise at the moment that it set in the West."[139] To an understanding of this connection, Certeau focuses particularly on the disclosing contrast that came out in writings between Sigmund Freud (1856-1939 AD) and his correspondent Romain Rolland (1866-1944 AD), of which he says that "the disagreement that appeared in the letters and works of these two correspondents, between 1927 and 1930, is characteristic of the perspectives that opposed - and continue to oppose - a 'mystical' point of view to a 'scientific' point of view."[140] But to get a clearer view of the place of wisdom (Ordinary *Sapientia*) in this semantic tension, I believe it is imperative to look at an earlier important shift that occurred, namely in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. It is the time when "the European culture had ceased to identify itself as Christian, ... and [when] one no longer designated as mystical that form of 'wisdom' elevated by a full recognition of the mystery already lived and announced in common beliefs [(Biblical *Sapientia*)], but rather an experimental knowledge that slowly detached itself from traditional theology or church institutions, characterized by the consciousness, received or acquired, of a fulfilling passivity in which the self loses itself in God."[141] Kees Waaijman identifies this understanding of the term 'mysticism' in its fourth stage of development, where he says that "a decisive shift in

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[138] Michel De Certeau and Marsanne Brammer, "Mysticism," *Diacritics* 22, no. 2 (1992): , doi:10.2307/465276.
[139] ibid.
[140] ibid.
[141] ibid.

meaning occur[ed]." Here 'mysticism' came to mean for things that are enigmatic and mysterious, and "which does not seem to be in accord with the sentiments of ordinary people. ... It became [rather] a term of opprobrium."[142]

Going back to Rahner's statement of the necessity of a Christian being a 'mystic', this he stated against the lurking background of such a displacement of an understanding of the term 'mysticism', and in an attempt to redeem the term from an understanding that severed both Ordinary and Biblical *Sapientia*, an understanding whose main consequence was Christian sterility. Rahner was addressing those many who professed themselves Christians but bore no sign of such a mark at all, those who deemed themselves Christians only because of their cultural affiliations to Christian Churches. Late in the nineteenth century Nietzsche rightly came out saying, "The greatest recent event - that 'God is dead,' that the belief in the Christian god has become unbelievable - is already beginning to cast its first shadows over Europe."[143] In *The Gay Science* he metaphorically presents the story of a madman who lights up a lamp in the day and rushes out in the marketplace shouting, 'I seek God', 'I seek God', with the marketplace crowd turning at him convulsed with ridicule. "The difference between the Madman and the market crowd was not that one believed and the other did not. Neither believed, and God died in the event of His own incredibility."[144]

> But the Madman alone knew what they had done and what they had lost. 'I will tell you. *We have killed him* - you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? ... What as holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives.'[145]

The whole point of Nietzsche here is not so much the present tension of 'perspectives that opposed a 'mystical' point of view to a 'scientific' point of view,' as to "the decline of its

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142   Kees Waaijman, Studies in Spirituality. Supplement, vol. 8, Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 355.
143   Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science,* Book 5 (New York: Random House, 1974), no.343, 279.
144   M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 681 doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.
145   ibid.

cultural urgency,"[146] which characterises so well contemporary debates between new atheists and theists.

Michael Buckley, in his article *Atheism and Contemplation*, underlines a hermeneutic that sheds new light on the 'mystical' dimension, particularly by showing its intersecting nature and common features that contemplation has with atheism. Just as in Nietzsche both the madman and the crowd did not believe in God, in a similar way, contemplation (mysticism) and atheism both seek to do away with a 'projection' of God. Their only difference lies in the fine line of their final orientation, whether one believes in God or not at heart. For an understanding of 'projection' from the viewpoint of atheism, Buckley first expounds on the reflexivity of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72 AD), wherein Feuerbach sees a way to "disclose the secret of religion as atheistic anthropology."[147] Feuerbach uses the argument from consciousness, language and historical experience. All shed light on the fact that God is a projection of the mind, whose essence exists only in the mind of people (consciousness), whose "divine predicates are attributes of human nature"[148] (language), and whose existence is the antithesis of man (historical experience). Then, he moves to Freud's "hypothesis that obsessional neurosis and religious practice are parallel. Both are defence mechanisms against instinctual satisfaction and against future punishment, linked with an inner sense of guilt."[149] He then sheds light on the nature of religious belief and its practices in the light of how a civilisation works, showing how the economy of religious control is executed on its members, and how religious ideas in civilisation become a "means by which the masses could be coerced or reconciled or recompensed for ... [their much] needed renunciations."[150] Finally, he makes reference to what Freud considered his chief contribution, on the connection between a belief

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146   ibid., 682.
147   ibid., 685.
148   ibid.
149   ibid., 687.
150   ibid.

in God and the father-complex, whom he considered the projection of a protecting-and-threatening father figure, one warranting both for a belief and practice of religion. "For Freud, God emerges either out of the needs for satisfaction or behind those demands of the superego to 'do it right.'"[151]

In our times, with institutional religion ever in decline in relation to the state and predominant cultures, a renewed interest in spirituality and mysticism cannot but be indicative that people are not simply seeking after the dead God of Nietzsche. Moreover, they seem not to be seeking a religious experience with an air of enthusiasm, or with "a sweeping call to revival, [(what the new atheism of Rchard Dawkins[152] and others alike are passionately seeking to take down),] but a serious engagement with the 'passive' experience of God and with the ascetical and psychic disciplines prerequisite for this engagement."[153] Buckley, regarding this, says: "It is here, it seems to me, in the richness of the contemplative tradition, that the conviction from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries becomes co-ordinate with a movement equally aware of the proclivity of religion to become a projection."[154]   In the contemplative tradition there is no one who understood and explained better such proclivity to projection than the Carmelite mystic John of the Cross (1542-91 AD). John's apophatic theology is not one of speculation about God and human beings, but "descriptive of a process by which God 'takes his abode in a human being by making him (her) live the life of God.'[(Living Flame of Love)]"[155] John gave us a spiritual doctrine explicating the different degrees of purification, effected both actively and passively as we enter a relationship with God, of things that impede us from a mystical union (or marriage) with God, things he describes in the form of desires and attachments, and which he attributes to the main faculties: intellect, memory and will. This

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[151]   ibid., 689.
[152]   Richard Dawkins, *The God delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2016).
[153]   M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 689
        doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.
[154]   ibid., 689-90.
[155]   ibid., 691.

experience of purification is one that is profoundly personal, one that no religious reassurance can sooth it. It goes painfully contrary to such faculties, described as an infusing dark ray of light shining on: the intellect, rendering it unable to form any thought that describes the experience; the memory, wherein the consuming object given most attention is nowhere to be found - "what should be there is missing;"[156] and the will, rendering in it a profound inability to lift itself up from such purification. All this is the gradual annihilation of all projection of God, leaving however, "a new love of God, not dictated by the human needs for immediate religious satisfaction but brought to birth by the infusion of purgative contemplation."[157] In poetic form, John expresses the effects of this contemplation as follows:

> *I entered into unknowing*
> *Yet when I saw myself there*
> *Without knowing where I was*
> *I understood great things;*
> *I shall not say what I felt*
> *For I remained in unknowing*
> *Transcending all knowledge.[158]*

The darkness of unknowing and associated pains are but a dialectical movement, or a progressive hermeneutic, "in which the human is purified from projection by a 'no' which is most radically a 'yes'."[159]

> Ludwig Feuerbach and Sigmund Freud on the one side and John of the Cross on the other are persuaded that much projection lies at the heart of our relationship with God. For the former, the response is to deny the reality of God; for John, it is to insist that the evolution or personal development of faith must pass through the desert and the cross.[160]

The way in manifests itself, however, especially with respect to the function of dogma in the Church, and its traditions, the difference between the two movements is appearing to our

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[156] Michel De Certeau, *The mystic fable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1.

[157] M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 695 doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.

[158] John of the Cross, translated by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, "Stanzas concerning an ecstasy experienced in high contemplation" *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 718.

[159] M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 696 doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.

[160] ibid., 697.

age as Certeau well described it: in "the perspectives that opposed - and continue to oppose - a 'mystical' point of view to a 'scientific' point of view."[161] "The function of dogmatic stability is not to explicate the mystery of God [(attributed to the movement of Feuerbach and Freud)] but to lead into it and to safeguard its incomprehensibility [(attributed to John)]."[162] For John, the initiator and agent of dogmatic incomprehensibility, safeguarded by his Mystical Theology, is Christ Himself, the Incarnate Wisdom. For him Christ is the pattern and agent of all purification. The active seeker first meets Jesus of the Gospels as model and new light, but then, "the completion of mystical union is achieved [passively] through being touched by Him and absorbed in Him."[163] As already alluded to, a renewed interest in spirituality and mysticism in our time is not incidental but indicative of an absence and a longing formative of a growing incomprehensibility of the Mystery, one that is urging for a rediscovery of signs now lost, a Mystical *Sapientia* that is not dead but has appeared somewhere else and is being heard again saying, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."[164]

2.3 A Compound Summary of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*

In summary to all core aspects of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* expounded in this chapter, Philosophical *Scientia* represents the development of the question of philosophy as having shifted weight from a primary philosophical *why* to an emerging mathematical *how*; this surely left profound effects on ways of enquiring truth, and hence, on ways of approaching and understanding reality. Empirical *Scientia* then appeared to be questioning this development of

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[161] Michel De Certeau and Marsanne Brammer, "Mysticism," *Diacritics* 22, no. 2 (1992): , doi:10.2307/465276.

[162] M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 696 doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.

[163] ibid., 697.

[164] Rev 3:20 (RSV)

Philosophical *Scientia*, asking for concrete evidence to substantiate any *how* claims the previous makes, evidence that lead Empirical *Scientia* in the problem of subjective experience. It came to ask a *how-we-come-to-know* question, a question that was surely contributory to the refinement of the scientific method, but also was and still is the cause of much cynicism and incredulity, especially with respect to a foundational or religious understanding of reality. Religious *Scientia* countered all this by showcasing figures from the Catholic world who, with an integrative religiosity, were able to hold in themselves both to content of their faith (suprarational knowledge) and any inquisitive, reasonable human knowledge of their time (rational knowledge), while deepening an understanding of both and not fearing irreconcilable contradictions between them. Religious *Scientia* is representative of those who are able to live in paradox of Truth. Whereas the previous are one-dimensional in their approaching an understanding of reality, Religious *Scientia*, in essence, is integrative of all truth dimensions.

On the other end, Ordinary *Sapientia*, is essentially representative of the experience of all man, universally nameless; it sculpted the way of peoples coming together in history, the way it gathered them around her, guided their hearts, and have raised them above natural processes, to claim a story of their own. But this nameless *Sapientia* was specially revealed by God in the story of a people, Israel, revealing another kind of wisdom, Biblical *Sapientia*. In Biblical *Sapientia* God sought a special faithfulness from his people, moving with them in transcendence from law principles to personification, from obedience of the law to a relationship with Him, until God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ, the Signifier of all signifiers, Signified of signifieds, *Sapientia* Himself. But after Jesus died, has risen and ascended to heaven, by the power of the Holy Spirit, through His Mystical Body, the Church, we can now experience Him mystically, revealing another form of wisdom, Mystical *Sapientia*. Mystical *Sapientia* is the Wisdom of God as communicating Himself to us in our age. In Mystical *Sapientia* one can enter Biblical *Sapientia* to live in truth with everyone in Ordinary *Sapientia*,

a journey that is prophetic in itself, because it requires both a great trust in God and a burning zeal for His Kingdom. Thomas Merton is one such contemporary figure in the Church that greatly witnessed to such a prophetic living. He is in fact considered by many a prophet to this age. In the following chapter, thus, I am going to introduce Thomas Merton and expound on his life, also locating his prophetic journey around the terms of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, especially by the way he understood them. The core definitions of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, as expounded in this chapter, will serve as a background particularly in the final chapter, where a final synthesis will be drawn.

Chapter 3

Thomas Merton: A Prophet to Our Age

3.0 To Know Thomas Merton is to Encounter Him

The life of Thomas Merton (1915-68) is reputedly one that cannot be easily categorised in neatly categories, let alone apprehended comprehensively. "Naomi Burton Stone [(1911-2004 AD)], Merton's literary agent and close friend, has written, 'Each one of us knows a different Thomas Merton.'"[165] But in saying this she also hinted to the fact that Thomas Merton is more that just an established spiritual master and teacher; he can be a personal companion to anyone who allows him an encounter. Along with the various labels descriptive of his wide range of selves, such as contemplative monk, writer, poet and ecumenist, he was after all, an ordinary guy, as Matthew Kelty (1915-2011, was once Merton's typist and later his confessor) once said of him. Kelty also said that "there was a truth about him that got under your skin, into your heart."[166] The life of Merton was one of continuous movement, coloured by various events and moments, one that continually demanded of him to decide between the place of comfort and Truth, a conscious life that was continuously developing in authenticity to witness for such Truth, never settling to passively comply, and therefore, bearing the mark of a prophet. Kelty also described Merton as one who "had a vision … and a sort of prophetic fire, the fire Christ came to cast on the earth, and called on this man to cast. … He was a great gift of God."[167]

Dr. Colleen M. Griffith, in a presentation titled, 'Thomas Merton: A Prophet for our Time',

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[165]   William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 59.

[166]   (Matthew Kelty, *The Man*) *Thomas Merton / Monk: A monastic tribute.* Edited by Patrick Hart. Cisterian Publications 1983, cited in John Moses, *Divine discontent: the prophetic voice of Thomas Merton* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 183.

[167]   ibid.

that she gave in Boston University on the occasion of the centenary year celebration of Merton's birth, said of Merton:

> As a spiritual guide and prophet, Merton just keeps on teaching one hundred years after his birth. … He has been described as the greatest Catholic spiritual writer of the twentieth century. … But most notably he modelled a kind of Catholicity that stretched beyond the limits of any single institution or tradition. He has been said to be a spiritual classic unto himself. We typically use the language, spiritual classic, to refer to texts. But if classics indicate something that remains compelling, formative and lasting, then, the life of Merton stands as such a text.[168]

3.1 An Itinerary of Growth into Merton's Life Journey

In view of Dr. Griffith's grand description of Thomas Merton, it is important also highlighting that Merton travelled a long way to be considered as such my many. In fact, he was not always warranting of such a great status, at least concretely, in his life story. Before entering the Trappist monastery of Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, Kentucky, in 1941, his life was totally the opposite of what the Trappist lifestyle demanded of its monks. In fact, prior to entering the Trappist monastery, he first tried entering a Franciscan monastery, but his application was rejected by the Franciscan vocation director there, due to Merton being open about his previous lifestyle. The director may have thought that he surely did not belong to any monastery given his past. Merton's younger life was marked by various breaks, movements and passions.

He was born in France in 1915 and lost his mother due to stomach cancer at the tender age of six years. He was then under the sole care of his father, who was a good painter but apparently not a great father figure. At the age of fourteen his father removed him from school in France to move to England. His father apparently made a success as a painter in England, but no more than three years passed since Merton also lost him due to a malignant tumor. At the time, Merton was attending Oakham Public School as a boarder. In Oakham, Merton

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[168]   Colleen M. Griffith, Thomas Merton: A Prophet for Our Time, January 12, 2016, accessed February 03, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9mYNrJDwmE&t=929s.

"moved from being clumsy, well-meaning adolescent to a sophisticated ... , worldly young man with cosmopolitan tastes, an increased sense of his own importance and a strong desire and a firm determination to find his place in the world. It was in Oakham that he earned the reputation of being 'something of a rebel'"[169] The headmaster of Oakham "recognised his unusual abilities and allowed him to add to the normal curriculum of classical studies, additional studies in modern languages and literature."[170] Merton was also involved in school activities, in particular a debating club that ventured engaging controversial subjects, in which he was an active member. He was also a writer and eventually an editor of 'The Oakhamian', the school paper. In Oakham he also "began to experience a certain attraction to solitude and quiet time." He recorded this in his unfinished novel *The Straits of Dover*, "which speaks of life at Oakham."[171] Following his father's death, while still being in Oakham, Merton was invited to America by his grandparents, where for a month and a half he did everything he could to enjoy New York as an adolescent. After he finished his studies in 1932, Merton was surprised, at a party, with a gift to go for a trip to Europe, by his then guardian and godfather, Tom Bennett, who was formerly the physician of his father. In his famous autobiographical book *The Seven Storey Mountain* he recounts of his experience in Rome, how he was awed by the Byzantine mosaics in Christian churches, and how he first came to know the person of Christ.

But this Rome experience was not to last for long, as in the fall of 1933 he began his studies in Clare College, Cambridge, a time he surely looked at with some distress years later.

> In those days it had been as if he had lost for the time being that sense of peace in solitude. The loneliness that had stalked him all his life had caught up with him. A sense of meaninglessness had set in and let to defiance and rebellion against his better instincts. He had neglected his studies, and had spent too much of his time at pubs. … His lack of discipline finally had led to disaster for him and for the unknown woman who bore his child. He had been summoned by his guardian, lectured sternly for his undisciplined life and told to return to America.[172]

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[169] William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 16.

[170] ibid.

[171] ibid., 19.

[172] ibid., 22.

In 1934 he abruptly left Cambridge and went to America, where he got to know his longtime friends Robert Lax and Edward Rice at Columbia University, a place that remained very close to his heart. He graduated from Columbia with a B.A. in 1938 and a year after with an M.A. During such time he was reading all sorts of philosophical and mystical literature, also, subjecting himself to the influence of quite a good number of teachers and friends. In 1938 Merton met an enigmatic Hindu guru, called Bramachari, who gave him the counsel, "There are many beautiful mystical books written by Christians. You should read St.Augustine's *Confessions* and *The Imitation of Christ*."[173] Bramachari rarely emphasised something, says Merton, but this he apparently emphasised to him. Merton later says of this event, "Now that I look back on those days, it seems to me very probable that one of the reasons why God had brought him all the way from India, was that he might say just that."[174] "But most memorable of all had been the event of November 16th, 1938: his reception into the Roman Catholic Church … in New York City."[175] His Cambridge friends would have been perplexed by this decision.

In the summer of 1939 he was staying together with his then close friends Lax and Rice in a cottage outside New York City. "Eating, drinking, reading, writing, discussing art, literature, poetry and the war in Europe, playing jazz records, staying up until all hours - that was their daily routine."[176] As the summer ended they returned back to New York City in the grim uncertainty of whether America was going to enter war. That October Merton enrolled in a Ph.D program at Columbia, a program which he never completed. Also, that same month, he was thinking about becoming a priest, a desire he opened up with Daniel Walsh, a teacher of philosophy. Walsh would very much encourage Merton for the priesthood, but not as a

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[173] Thomas Merton, *The seven storey mountain* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1976), 198.
[174] ibid.
[175] William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 6.
[176] ibid., 5.

Diocesan priest; he encouraged him for the religious life. As they spoke about the different orders, though Walsh had a special interest in the Trappists, he thought it was "too severe for Merton."[177] He finally suggested to him the Franciscans, a suggestion which Merton took but, as already mentioned, would eventually be failed entrance there. Following such an attempt, Merton kept close to the Franciscans by taking the post of an English teacher at St.Bonaventure University, New York. At the time, he also bought a set of breviaries and began saying the office daily. "During Holy Week in the second semester of his teaching …, he made a decision that would change the entire course of his life. He chose to make a retreat at the … Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani [at the suggestion of Walsh]. … The monastery and liturgy made a deep impression on him. … It was love at first sight. That love would be tested., challenged (sometimes by himself), but it would govern the rest of his mortal life."[178] Some time after, while praying to Thérèse of Lisieux, he received what he understood the sign of a vocation, which finally led him to decide to enter the Trappist life.

Upon entering the monastery, Merton's life was to be structured, given a strict rhythm, leaving not much room for his personal interests and tastes; it was a place that looked somewhat antithetical to his previous lifestyle. But there, "he was free to become the person God wanted him to be. And in his first enthusiasm he felt assured that what he had to do to fulfill the will of God was to keep the rule of the monastic life. The noisy 'rebel' had become the quiet, submissive monk. At least for the time."[179] In the monastery, he did not want to write anymore as he thought that writing was a hindrance to contemplation. In fact, he "assumed that the early promise of a writer's career would be sacrificed as part of his desire to live as a contemplative monk.[180] But the Abbot soon recognised his writing abilities and encouraged him to write his

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[177]   ibid., 24.
[178]   ibid., 27.
[179]   ibid., 30.
[180]   Thomas Merton and Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Thomas Merton: spiritual master: the essential writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 33.

autobiography, published under the title *The Seven Storey Mountain*, which became a bestseller

the following year. "After the enormous success of his autobiography there was both pressure

to write more and, on Merton's part, a legitimate reason for doing what was, in fact, something

close to his heart."[181] In this context of a description Shannon describes Merton's life as a

double miracle:

> … the great miracle of Merton's story is that, with the background from which he came, he
> stayed a monk of Gethsemani to the very end. But I think of a second miracle, namely, the fact
> that, given the highly structured life … (which gave him very limited time for reading and
> writing), Merton nevertheless was able to produce the staggering amount of writing (books,
> poetry, letters, journals).[182]

In his early years as a Catholic monk, Merton thought of the monastery as a place where

one can be separate from the world, being a outlook of his early Catholicism. This is all

reflected especially in his bestseller by the "narrowness of its theology, the smug sense of

belonging to the 'true' church, the frequent put-downs of other Christian churches, [etc.] … If

the [bestseller] … continues to appeal to a whole new generation of readers, this is not because

of, but in spite of, its theological stance."[183] But the mark of a true contemplative was to be

revealed in him much later by a very vivid experience, what came to be known as 'the Vision

of Louisville', which he had on March 18, 1958, seventeen years after entering Gethsemani.

Some three years before this experience, Merton was given the very important position of a

master of novices, "at a time where his understanding of what it meant to be a monk was [also]

undergoing radical changes."[184] This position, "not only provided Merton with opportunities to

delve deeply into the Christian monastic and mystical tradition but also to learn about and from

the men he was teaching."[185]

> Between 1955 and 1965 Merton became a very different kind of monk from the one who had
> in 1941 entered Gethsemani with the fervent desire to leave the world behind and give himself

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[181]   ibid.

[182]   William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 33.

[183]   ibid., 62.

[184]   ibid., 37.

[185]   Christine M. Bochen, "Striving for Mercy: Envisioning the Church of the Twenty-First Century," Merton Annual 28, (November 2015): 54-70.

to God alone. One of the things going on in him was the maturing realization, born of his contemplation, that it is not possible to leave the world in any real sense. … The world is on both sides of the monastic walls.[186]

'The Vision of Louisville' was for him a graceful moment that broke open his vocation as a monk to the world. He described it, "I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all those people [(in the world)], that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers."[187] This realisation did not at all place him in opposition to his vocation as a monk, but rather made it more complete. In fact, thereafter, his writings shed light not only on the contemplative life in the confines of a monastic understanding of its quality, but also against the social issues of the time, war and peace, and even inter-religious dialogue. His Catholicity was evidently changing from one of duality, exclusivity and separation, to one of unity, inclusivity and universality, in the very sense of the term 'Catholic'. His concept of tradition was also changing; "in *Seeds of Contemplation* (1949) he seems to see tradition as a strict adherence to dogmatic formulas handed down from the past."[188] In *No Man Is and Island*, some six years later, speaking of the monastic tradition, he writes that tradition "is rooted in the wisdom of the distant past, and yet is living and young, with something peculiarly new and original to say to the [people] of our own time."[189] All of this surely became all the more clear to him after the Louisville experience. Speaking of his Louisville experience in *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* he writes of monasticism:

> Certainly these traditional values are very real, but their reality is not of an order outside everyday existence in a contingent world, nor does it entitle one to despise the secular … we are in the same world as everybody else, the world of the bomb, the world of the race hatred, the world of technology, the world of mass media, big business, revolution, and all the rest. We take a different attitude to all these things … But does that entitle us to consider ourselves different, or even *better*, than others? … This sense of liberation from an illusory difference

[186] William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 37.

[187] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 156.

[188] William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton encyclopedia* s.v. "Tradition" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

[189] Thomas Merton, *No man is an island* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1983), accessed February 12, 2017. https://goo.gl/OvbWV5, 148.

was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. … To think that for sixteen or seventeen years I have been taking seriously this pure illusion that is implicit in so much of our monastic thinking.[190]

The great paradox of Merton's life, especially in view of this development, is that, the more he felt one with all the peoples in the world, the more he sought to live in solitude. In 1953, after much insistence, his abbot "gave Merton the use of an old tool shed out in the woods and allowed him to spend time there each day. … He called his hermitage St.Anne's. … It would not be until 1965 that he would be given permission to live as a full-time hermit on the grounds of the monastery."[191] It is as if saying that Merton had entered the monastery, and eventually sought to live the eremitical life, to re-enter the world with healed, fresh eyes, this time not of his own accord, but as hidden in the wisdom of his tradition. But Merton knew well that tradition as was handed over to him was not enough to re-enter the world as such. He increasingly felt that he had to make it his own, becoming one with it, to be truly true to his vocation as a monk. Cunningham notes, "he immersed himself in his own tradition, but there was a way in which he wished to add to it. … A journal entry [(1964)] he made after a (rare) trip outside the monastery to visit the Zen scholar D.T. Suzuki is not atypical:"[192]

> Literature, contemplative solitude, Latin America, Asia, Zen, Islam, etc., all these things come together in my life. It would be madness for me to attempt to create a monastic life for myself by excluding all these. I would be less a monk. Others may have their way of doing it but I have mine.[193]

Finally, in the light of Merton's understanding of monasticism, I want to end with Cunningham's comment about the way of approaching Merton and his works, as relevant to an interpretation transcending his time:

> In my estimation, it is Merton's monasticism that is the crucial key to understanding him as a public person, as a writer, and as a spiritual master. Thomas Merton, to be sure, evolved in his

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[190] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 157.

[191] William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 36.

[192] Thomas Merton and Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Thomas Merton: spiritual master: the essential writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 24.

[193] Thomas Merton and Robert E. Daggy, *Dancing in the water of life: seeking peace in the hermitage* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 125.

own appreciation of what is meant to be a monk and in what sense he was a monk. Nonetheless, if we are to approach him and his writing, it is through the monastic prism that we must look.[194]

3.2 The Locale of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* in Merton

Merton's journey of growth, as outlined in the previous section, can be understood as divided in three main stages. The first stage represents the time before Merton entered the monastery; the second, the time henceforward until the 'Vision of Louisville'; and the third, the time henceforward until the end of his journey on earth.

In terms of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*, moving from the first to the second stage, Merton learned that he could no longer trust in his own abilities (in his own knowledge or *Scientia*) to please God and to attain to His wisdom. He wanted so much to please God that he was happy to renounce himself and enter a monastery governed by a strict rule of obedience, with a tradition, an old *Scientia*, that could give him an assurance of a *perfect* obedience to God. He, in fact, stood by this old *Scientia* all the rest of his life, but during the second stage he was gradually intuiting that the monastery was not in reality much different from the outside world, the monks were human too! He was also gradually recognising that monastic obedience was not enough to please God; that God's wisdom, or *Sapientia*, cannot be attained to merely by obedience. Rather, such growing, painful intuiting was the fruit of a *Sapientia* in labor. Once, he wrote, "The paradox is that, in spite of all, we have found God and that is probably the trouble."[195] This must have urged him to dig deeper in the old *Scientia* for a more comprehensive understanding of its wisdom, until he had 'The Vision of Louisville', which he also described, "It was like waking up from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness."[196] This description reveals

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[194]   Thomas Merton and Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Thomas Merton: spiritual master: the essential writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 20-21.
[195]   Thomas Merton and Lawrence Cunningham, *A search for solitude: pursuing the monk's true life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 71.
[196]   Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 156.

the birth and inauguration of *Sapientia* in his life, the crossing to the third stage, something

Merton could not have achieved by himself, but which surely had changed his life forever. In

Hagia Sophia, "a prose poem on divine Wisdom,"[197] he expresses this saying,

> *The helpless one, abandoned to sweet sleep, the gentle one will awake:*
> *Sophia.*
> *All that is sweet in her tenderness will speak to him on all sides in*
> *everything,*
> *without ceasing, and he will never be the same again.*[198]

This was a greater fulfillment of his monastic vocation, something which sought in him to bring

the old *Scientia* to a much greater perfection, firmly rooting him in such *Scientia* yet giving

him the ability to transcend its bounds with *Sapientia*, reaching out from it to everyone in the

world.

Once, in a letter to Jean Leclercq (1911-93 AD), in an effort to understand "St.

Bernard's attitude toward 'learning'" in terms of 'scientia' and 'sapientia', Merton asked:

> Have you any particular lights on the distinction between science and wisdom in the
> Cistercians, or do you know of anything published in their regard? It seems to me to be an
> interesting point, especially to those of us who, like yourself and me, are monks engaged in a
> sort of '*scientia*' along with their contemplation![199]

It is interesting noting how Merton describes monks as "engaged in a sort of 'scientia' along

with their contemplation!" Here, he seems to be locating the sapiential paradox, that between

attaining to a greater knowledge of tradition, its history and theological implications, while

returning back in unknowing, in contemplation, to the primordial innocence of Adam, before

knowing good and evil,[200] before the fall. In another place, while commenting on Augustine's

relation between this Genesis passage and *Scientia*, he says that, the temptation to cut through

the paradox might be to attain to *Sapientia* without knowledge then, referring to the time of the

Desert Fathers, particularly John the Dwarf, for whom, he says, that this was a disaster. "All

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[197]   William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton encyclopedia*
          s.v. "Hagia Sophia" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

[198]   Thomas Merton and Victor Hammer, *Hagia Sophia* (Lexington, KY: Stamperia del Santuccio, 1978).

[199]   Thomas Merton, Jean Leclercq, and Patrick Hart, *Survival or prophecy?: the letters of Thomas Merton and
          Jean Leclercq* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 16-17.

[200]   cf. Gen 3:5

this is nothing but a refinement of 'knowledge.' Instead of leading to innocence, it leads to the

most quintessentially pure love of self."[201] In this context, he therefore seems to be leveling in

paradox a *Scientia* that leads to the Truth with innocence, contemplation. In fact, accordingly,

in another place, he interrelates and even exchanges a description of *Scientia* (knowledge) and

Sapientia (primordial/contemplative innocence):

> Both monastery and university came into being in a civilization open to the sacred, that is to say, in a civilization which paid a great deal of attention to what it considered to be its own primordial roots in a mythical and archetypal holy ground, a spiritual creation. Thus the Logos or Ratio of both monastery and university is pretty much the same. Both are "schools," and they teach not so much by imparting information as by bringing the clerk (in the university) or the monk (in the monastery) to direct contact with "the beginning," the archetypal paradise world. This was often stated symbolically by treating the various disciplines of university and monastic life, respectively, as the "four rivers of paradise." At the same time, university and monastery tended sometimes to be in very heated conflict, for though they both aimed at "participation" in and "experience" of the hidden and sacred values implanted in the "ground" and the "beginning," they arrived there by different means: the university by *scientia*, intellectual knowledge, and the monastery by *sapientia*, or mystical contemplation. (Of course, the monastery itself easily tended to concentrate on *scientia* - the science of the Scriptures - and in the university there could be mystics like Aquinas, Scotus, and Eckhart. So that in the end, in spite of all the fulminations of the Cistercian St. Bernard, a deeper *sapientia* came sometimes from schools than from monasteries.)[202]

But Merton, here, is saying that, though university is mainly representative of *Scientia* and the

monastery of *Sapientia*, these institutional archetypes do not necessarily represent one's actual

position in *Scientia* and *Sapientia*. Actual *Scientia* and *Sapientia* for him are beyond any

institutional label, and can include everyone in their interrelated movements, irrespective of

any one's state or vocation in the world. Here are some descriptions of what he sees then as an

essence of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*:

> ### On Scientia:
>
> The friends of Job appear on the scene as advisers and 'consolers,' offering Job the fruits of their moral *scientia*. But when Job insists that his sufferings have *no explanation* and that he cannot discover the reason for them through conventional ethical concepts, his friends turn into accusers, and curse Job as a sinner. Thus, instead of consolers, they become torturers by virtue of their very morality, and in so doing, while claiming to be advocates of God, they act as instruments of the devil.
> In other words, the realm of knowledge or *scientia* is a realm where man is subject to the influence of the devil. This does nothing to alter the fact that knowledge is good and necessary.

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[201]   Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. "The recovery of paradise."*Thomas Merton: selected essays* (Orbis, 2014), III.
[202]   Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton. Stone, *Love and living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 9.

Nevertheless, even when our 'science' does not fail us, it still tends to delude us. Its perspectives are not those of our inmost, spiritual nature. And at the same time we are constantly being misled by passion, attachment to self, and by the 'deceptions of the devil.' The realm of knowledge is then a realm of alienation and peril, in which we are not our true selves and in which we are likely to become completely enslaved to the power of illusion. And this is true not only when we fall into sin but also to some extent when we avoid it.[203]

On Sapientia:

[It is] a kind of knowledge by identification, an intersubjective knowledge, a communion in cosmic awareness and nature … a wisdom based on love.[204]

The 'wisdom' approach to man seeks to apprehend man's value and destiny in their global and even ultimate significance. Since fragmentation and objectivity do not suffice for this and since quantitative analysis will not serve, either, sapiential thought resorts to poetic myth and to religious or archetypal symbol.[205]

Sapiential awareness deepens our communion with the concrete: it is not an initiation into a world of abstractions and ideals.[206]

Sapientia [wisdom]-*sapor boni* [the savor of the good] (3rd. nocturn-St.Bernard). To know and taste the secret good that is *present* but is not known to those who, because they are restless and because they are discontent and because they complain, cannot apprehend it. The present good-reality-God. *Gustate et videte*. [Taste and see.][207]

In the context of a discussion on the crisis of modern man, particularly of his incapability to penetrate 'poetic myth … and religious or archetypal symbol' like the ancients, Merton asks the crucial question of whether there is "some other opening for Christian consciousness today"[208] other than "traditional religious, philosophical, and scientific models."[209] He suggests sapiential knowledge as a possibility of such an opening, and this he seemingly describes in contrast to a self-serving *Scientia*, a *Scientia* that does not seek to go beyond itself into the unknown, one which he sees as having divested even religious language and symbol of their 'imaginative awareness of basic meaning':

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203 Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. "The recovery of paradise."*Thomas Merton: selected essays* (Orbis, 2014), II.
204 Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, *The literary essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1985), 108.
205 Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. "Baptism in the Forest: Wisdom and Initiation in William Faulkner." *Thomas Merton: selected essays* (Orbis, 2014).
206 ibid.
207 Thomas Merton and Lawrence Cunningham, *A search for solitude: pursuing the monk's true life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 70.
208 Thomas Merton, "The New Consciousness," *Zen and the birds of appetite* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 30.
209 Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia: the hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical, 2015), 102.

> I would submit that the term 'religious' no longer conveys the idea of an imaginative awareness of basic meaning. … And I would say that the word 'metaphysical' is not quite adequate to convey these values. There are other possibilities. One of them is *sapiential*. Sapientia is the Latin word for 'wisdom.' And wisdom in the classical, as well as the Biblical, tradition is something quite definite. It is the highest level of cognition. It goes beyond *scientia*, which is systematic knowledge, beyond *intellectus*, which is intuitive understanding. It has deeper penetration and wider range than either of these. It embraces the entire scope of man's life and all its meaning … Wisdom is not only speculative, but also practical: that is to say, it is 'lived.' And unless one 'lives' it, one cannot 'have' it. It is not only speculative but creative. It is expressed in living signs and symbols.[210]

Sapiential knowledge, is for Merton of an order different than scientific or *detached* knowledge (speculative, idealist and conceptual); sapiential knowledge cannot be imparted without involving the whole life of the teacher. It must surely be a living knowledge, a knowledge already present and available in both teacher and student, one that needs to be cultivated and continually rediscovered in the context of a living tradition.

> But *sapientia* is not inborn. True, the seeds of it are there, but they must be cultivated. Hence wisdom develops not by itself but in a hard discipline of traditional training, under the expert guidance of one who himself possesses it and who therefore is qualified to teach it. For wisdom cannot be learned from a book. It is acquired only in living formation; and it is tested by the master himself in certain critical situations.[211]

Tradition, apart from holding in itself the qualities of discipline training and a living formation, it also presents symbol, language and myth to its adherents, as charged points of access to such living knowledge. These three, however, to be true to what they represent, and hence, to be effective as mediators, must first be born with *Sapientia* in the secret recesses of their founder's hearts, and be continually rediscovered by their faithful followers with *Sapientia*, with the gift of an ability to discern the signs of the times, and hence forming and shaping a living tradition. These persons cannot be but those bestowed with a prophetic gift, a peculiar prophetic awareness, those who can read the present as it really is from the perspective of God, in Jesus Christ, The Prophet of prophets, *Sapientia* Himself. These are those 'who [themselves] possess [*Sapientia*] and who therefore [are] qualified to teach it.'

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[210]   Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, *The literary essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1985), 98-99.

[211]   Patrick F. O'Connell, ed. "Baptism in the Forest: Wisdom and Initiation in William Faulkner." *Thomas Merton: selected essays* (Orbis, 2014).

3.3 Thomas Merton: A Prophet Speaking to Our Age.

In the foreward of a publication[212] (formerly a doctoral dissertation) dedicated to the exploration of a multitude of forms and stages of Christian prophecy, by Niels Christian Hvidt, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said,

> What is a prophet? A prophet is a not a soothsayer; the essential element of the prophet is not the prediction of future events. The prophet is someone who tells the truth on the strength of his contact with God - the truth for today, which also, naturally, sheds light on the future. It is not a question of foretelling the future in detail, but of rendering the truth of God present at this moment in time and of pointing us in the right direction.[213]

The way I have presented Merton's life so far, without a mention of the prophetic, can make it, for some, difficult to really *encounter* him in his itinerary of growth as reaching to *Sapientia*; this especially when it comes to his energetical transformation following the 'Vision of Louisville', a moment specially attributed to Grace. Generally speaking, "without the leaven of prophecy, wisdom might tend to overlook the problems and contradictions of the concrete human condition. Receptivity could decay into inertia and quietism."[214] But this is precisely what Merton himself was freed from in the 'Vision of Louisville', by virtue of a momentous, prophetic receptivity: "the illusion that by making vows we [(the monks)] become a different species of being, pseudoangels, 'spiritual man,' men of interior life, what have you. … And I [(Merton)] suppose my happiness could have taken form in the words: 'Thank God, thank God that I *am* like other men, that I am only a man among others.'"[215] The prophetic side of Merton, therefore, is what actually opens up his experience to be encountered by others. In fact, this "is often referred to as his 'return to the world'."[216]

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[212] Niels Christian. Hvidt, *Christian prophecy: the post-biblical tradition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[213] ibid., VII.

[214] Patrick O'Connell, "Wisdom and Prophecy: The Two Poles of Thomas Merton's Mature Spirituality," *The American Benedictine Review* 60, no. 3 (2009), 278.

[215] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 157.

[216] Ephrem Arcement, *In the school of prophets: the formation of Thomas Merton's prophetic spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2015), XVI.

Merton, [here], also reconciled himself with his past. Subsequent journal entries as well as subsequent letters … reveal how many of the interests and passions that had occupied his premonastic mind were suddenly regrafted onto the vine of his new identity. He began to revisit writers who had interested him in his young adulthood - rereading them, reinterpreting them, allowing them to inform his new consciousness as a monk for the world. He particularly returned to William Blake [(a poet he knew from a very young age)], and experienced a renewal of his interest in poetry.[217]

Ephrem Arcement says, that, "a chronological study of Merton's writings reveals a marked increase in the use"[218] of the terms 'prophet', 'prophecy', and 'prophetic' after the Louisville event. But Arcement also says that the Louisville experience can all too easily be burdened with such a significance. Even before he entered the monastery, Merton was already interested in the prophetic, referring to figures like William Blake as prophets. Moreover, after entering the monastery he identified with three biblical prophets namely Jonas, Elijah, and John the Baptist. In *The Sign of Jonas* he says, "... like Jonas himself I find myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox."[219] Here he also compares for the first time the vocation of the monk with that of the prophet, saying, "... because the monks are heirs of the prophets."[220] "The prophet Elijah is an important figure in the early development of Merton's understanding of the relationship between contemplation and action."[221] John the Baptist, however, was by far his favourite; in him he saw "symbolic figure who unites the contemplative and the prophetic roles within a single vocation."[222] Everything was building up to that graceful moment in Louisville.

It is as if before the redefining event in Louisville, Merton had only flirted with the prophetic, whereas now he accepted it as a divine mandate. Louisville released him to live prophetically without restraint. It also provided him with the content of his prophetic activity, namely, *the reconciliation of all things in Christ through the dismantling of the illusion of separateness.*[223]

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[217] ibid., XXII.
[218] ibid., XV.
[219] Thomas Merton, *The sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 11.
[220] ibid.
[221] Ephrem Arcement, *In the school of prophets: the formation of Thomas Merton's prophetic spirituality* (Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2015), XIX.
[222] ibid.
[223] ibid., XXIV.

3.3.1 Prophecy in Merton's Words

> A prophet is one who lives in direct submission to the Holy Spirit in order that, by his life, actions and words, he may at all times be a sign of God in the world of men. Christ the Incarnate Word was of course the supreme Prophet, and all sanctity participates in this prophetic quality.[224]

> The prophetic struggle with the world is the struggle of the Cross against worldly power.[225]

> To live prophetically, you've got to be questioning and looking at factors behind the facts. You've got to be aware that there are contradictions. In a certain sense, our prophetic vocation consists in hurting from the contradictions in society. This is a real cross in our lives today. For we ourselves are partly responsible.[226]

> We just let Christ be faithful to us. If we live with that kind of mind, we are prophetic. We become prophetic when we live in such a way that our life is an experience of the infallible fidelity of God. That's the kind of prophecy we are called to, not the business of being able to smell the latest fashion coming ten years before it happens. It is simply being in tune with God's mercy and will.[227]

> One of the central issues in the prophetic life is that a person rocks the boat, not by telling slaves to be free, but by telling people who *think* they're free that they're slaves.[228]

3.3.2 Identifying the Dominant Crisis

Throughout his lifetime, especially during the last decade of his life (the decade following the 'Vision of Louisville'), Merton commented about, harshly criticised and even encouraged many things happening in the world, from poetry to technology to contemplation to non-violence. But a prophet, to be truly a prophet, must be in possession of another very important quality, that of speaking with words that address not only his generation, but mostly subsequent generations. "The perspective of a subsequent generation is required before a word can be seen to have been truly prophetic. … [But] the prophet is often condemned to live with the hope that the *ache* of God could penetrate the *numbness* of history. It is a sentence that captures the

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[224]   Thomas Merton, *Disputed questions* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 223.
[225]   Thomas Merton, *The springs of contemplation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 81.
[226]   ibid., 157.
[227]   ibid,, 73.
[228]   ibid., 133.

situation in which Merton repeatedly found himself as he pursued what many regarded as

nothing more that the inconvenient questions of a radical social criticism."[229]

John Moses, in this context of a discussion, says:

> Merton addressed a succession of issues, but can it also be argued that he identified the dominant crisis? And did he suggest that such a crisis manifested itself as one problem after another presented itself? And did he have an entirely new way of looking at life, an alternative consciousness, to propose?
> The dominant crisis which shapes the public consciousness and influences private perceptions is bound to be subject to critical dispute. Denials of the freedom and the integrity of the individual; the subordination of the person to public institutions; power and the violence which is implicit in every abuse of power - these are all bound to be strong contenders. All featured prominently in Merton's social criticism, but the evidence of his vocations and his writings, of his private convictions and his public profile, is that for him the dominant and enduring crisis is encapsulated by the idea of _alienation_. For Merton alienation is an experience of disconnectedness, of fragmentation, of despair. It is persistent because it is to be seen in every relationship, every circumstance. It is enduring because it is a universal phenomenon which passes in its varying forms from one generation to another. It is not merely a question of politics or economics. It is related far more to the loss of the religious dimension. It is, in short, a 'crisis of man's spirit' with global dimensions that are religious and moral.[230]

Moses continues by explicating Merton's posture against alienation, most especially as we are

directly experiencing in this age, the subsequent generation of Merton:

> It was the monastic perspective that enabled Merton to have some understanding of the human predicament in what he called an 'age of alienation'. He took note of the tell-tale signs: the perceived absence of God; the decline into a new barbarism in which the freedom of the individual loses all meaning; the claims for personal autonomy that are deceptive and ultimately self-destructive; the emergence of a culture which is acquisitive, aggressive; the obsession with money and power; the preoccupation with clichés, with intellectual abstractions, with sensual fantasies; the myth - the idolatrous myth - that 'we are of all generations the most enlightened, the most objective, the most scientific, and the most progressive and the most humane'. The alienation of which Merton spoke was not determined by economic circumstances but - as he argued in his final lecture in Bangkok on the day of his death - by men and women's estrangement from God and from their deepest selves as human beings.
> It was the inherent falsehood of what he observed as he looked out upon the world, especially the Western world, that preoccupied Merton.[231]

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[229]   John Moses, *Divine discontent: the prophetic voice of Thomas Merton* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 188.
[230]   ibid., 189.
[231]   ibid.

3.4 An Abundant Life Hidden in Encounter

In concluding, I wish to highlight the intimate, mysterious and most inviting aspect of Merton's personality, his religious posture, not just in view of what he said as a spiritual master and teacher, but particularly the way he presented himself as *still* experiencing and journeying, also, as sharing in the ways of other sincere seekers. As already quoted, Naomi Burton Stone once said of herself and other of Merton's acquaintances, "Each one of us knows a different Thomas Merton."[232] Kelty also said, "there was a truth about him that got under your skin, into your heart."[233] This shows us that, for the people he encountered in his life, and even his readers up till today, Merton had the rare capacity to create a personal space, both charismatically and poetically, to meet the other in his/her truth, the way s/he is. He was evidently a person of relationships, however, preferred to live a life of solitude; though the life of others mattered much for him, he never compromised his centre for anyone; though he was well read in many subjects and matters, he always followed his heart in the end. All these paradoxical qualities cannot but be a witness to a greater yet hidden centre in his life, one operative in intimacy, what was figuratively described as *Sapientia* labouring and being born in his life; it is a centre that can be sensed by anyone encountering him but not truly objectified by the expert.

After 'The Vision of Louisville', Merton was happy to announce that he was a man like any other; that his experiences share in the experiences of many; that contemplation is not just for cloistered monks but everyone. His primary quality witnessing to all this was, his eagerness to say *yes* to everyone where he really can, and this, irrespective of any labels and religious backgrounds. Here, one cannot not also glimpse the heart of the New Testament, Jesus Christ, incarnate in his life. In this sense, Merton is a prophet to the extent that he is a living gospel to

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[232]   William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 59.

[233]   (Matthew Kelty, *The Man*) *Thomas Merton / Monk: A monastic tribute*. Edited by Patrick Hart. Cisterian Publications 1983, cited in John Moses, *Divine discontent: the prophetic voice of Thomas Merton* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 183.

this age. In his *yes* to everyone, however, like Jesus and the many saints, he suffered and still suffers an adamant *no* by those many who label him as heretic. But this is what in truth keeps sealed the great mystery of his personality I believe, that is, the paradox that completes his catholicity and destiny of a prophetic life. For the purpose and scope of this study, these personal qualities were weaved around the constants of *Scientia* and *Sapientia*. His personal journey was presented as one moving to the depths of *Scientia* to be discovered by *Sapientia*, in the spirit of prophecy. In the following chapter, also by taking up all that has been said so far, I am going to draw upon Merton's prophetic journey to frame a final synthesis of hope for this age, an age characterised by a festering alienation.

Chapter 4

Hearing Again *Sapientia* Knocking on the Door of our

Alienation

4.0 A Figurative *Scientia* and *Sapientia* as Informing the Role of the Prophet

The aim of this chapter is to finally bring together in a synthesis of hope the dominant perceiving structures of this age (chapter 1), as grounded in core aspects of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* (chapter 2), the way they can be reworked in the prophetic life of Thomas Merton (chapter 3); this, to help us rediscovering a sapiential *possibility*[234] as relevant to the ethos of our age.

Speaking figuratively, *Scientia*, more than ever, is the one reigning over the complex and powerful structures of our contemporary world; *Sapientia*, on the other hand, is very much misrepresented and suppressed by this powerful *Scientia*, to the extent that it is even entering the monasteries (strongholds of *Sapientia*) with gullible promises whose structural implications the religious cannot easily discern. Deep, somewhere, within the hearts of All men, however, *Sapientia* is there turned away crying, echoing a certain restlessness, prompting men to call upon her name, and to relate with her once again. Unfortunately, upon hearing her cries, most men are instead trying to silence her altogether. Thomas Merton, in his prose poem *Hagia Sophia* writes:

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[234] Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, *The literary essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1985), 98-9.

Thus Wisdom cries out to all who will hear (Sapientia
clamitat in plateis) and she cries out particularly
to the little, to the ignorant and the helpless.[235]

Scientia is now so powerful that it riddled almost every way to *Sapientia*; it even empowered

the little, the ignorant and the helpless with means that can make them believe the illusion that

they are thriving, with the consequence of gradually casting off their littleness, ignorance and

helplessness. *Scientia* even entered the pockets of most men, channelling through its

technological structures news from all around the world to the second, and providing grandiose

possibilities of instant personal communication with anyone or anything existing in the world.

By this, men are becoming continuously overwhelmed, consumed by a certain curiosity and

wont to keep up with everything happening outside their lives. In this way, *Scientia* managed

to infiltrate to the very core of their living structures, which previously, in occasional moments,

afforded them a space for a delightful stride with their friend and true lover, *Sapientia*.

This poetic scene of *Scientia* and *Sapientia* is essentially representative of the situation,

in such terms, of our society, Western society. This is in no way setting the stage for the idea

that we need to beat back all that is *Scientia*, to focus on the revival, or better, the survival of

Sapientia. As Merton well said with reference to John the Dwarf, this will only result in the

refinement of knowledge, of *Scientia* itself. Merton sees the artists and poets as having

something to say about this:

> The final answer does not remain entirely and exclusively in the hands of those who are still
> equipped to interpret ancient religious traditions. Nor is it in the hands of the scientist and
> technician. The artist and poet seem to be the ones most aware of the disastrous situation, but
> they are for that very reason the closest to despair. If man is to recover his sanity and spiritual
> balance, there must be a renewal of communion between the traditional, contemplative
> disciplines and those of science, between poet and the physicist, the priest and the depth-
> psychologist, the monk and the politician.[236]

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[235]   Thomas Merton and Victor Hammer, *Hagia Sophia* (Lexington, KY: Stamperia del Santuccio, 1978).
[236]   Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton. Stone, *Love and living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985),
79.

This is similar to what the proponents of metamodernism glimpsed as a possibility to a metamodern structure of feeling, that, "it is perhaps only in art - and this is the importance of art - that it can be realised, and communicated, as a whole experience."[237] Similarly, Merton says that "art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time."[238]   But in the quoted above, he also implies a religious posture similar to that of Religious *Scientia* as a way to persist *poetically/artistically* in the paradoxes of seemly opposite poles. One cannot look only to religious traditions, or the scientist and technician. We need them both to recover a 'spiritual balance.' But such a religious posture cannot but be a position 'closest to despair,' of feeling pressed to the wall, one that "points them toward hope as their only recourse."[239] With regards to the role of the prophet, he says, "Our prophetic vocation consists in hurting from the contradictions in society."[240] That is why Merton used to also call artists and poets like William Blake prophets, because he saw in them such qualities.

4.1 Merton's Counter-Consciousness to a Glorious *Scientia*

The main crisis of this age is essentially an over-glorification of *Scientia* that is different in kind than other of its more known glorifications. Whereas traditional glorifications of *Scientia* took the form of more identifiable idolatries, such as pharisaic religiosity, love of money, love of status, etc., this time it is appearing to society at large more as something neutral and harmless. That is why 'it is even entering the monasteries (strongholds of *Sapientia*) with gullible promises whose structural implications the religious cannot easily discern.' Early on in his life as a monk, Merton was troubled by the introduction of machinery in the monastery.

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[237]   Raymond Williams and John Higgins, "Film and the dramatic tradition," The Raymond Williams reader (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 40.

[238]   Thomas Merton, No man is an island (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1983), accessed February 12, 2017, https://goo.gl/OvbWV5, 23.

[239]   Gordon Oyer, "Confronting the Myth of Human Progress: Thomas Merton and the Illusion of Privilege," *Merton Annual* 28, (November 2015), 154.

[240]   Thomas Merton, *The springs of contemplation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 157.

"Replacing horses and wagons with motorised vehicles troubled … [him], as he saw the silence and quiet of the monastery being invaded by noise and busyness"[241] However, much later on in his life, in a journal entry making a reference to his tape recorder, he said, "It is a very fine machine and I am abashed by it. I take back some of the things I have said about technology."[242] This shows that, it was not easy, even for Merton, to discern a religious stance on technology, to employ a Religious *Scientia* against the elusive character of technology. Merton, in this regard, was very impressed by the insights of Ellul in *The Technological Society*, saying of it that "it is full of firecrackers. A fine provocative book and one that really makes sense."[243] In a review of Ellul's book in *Commonweal*, Merton points out:

> To assume that our massive technology is fully under the rational control of human intelligence orienting it toward a flowering and fulfillment of man is not only naive but perilous. Ellul does not say that it cannot be brought under control,. But he thinks the situation is desperate and that we have not yet begun to do anything serious about it.[244]

In his time, Merton could not have imagined technology developing up to the internet phenomenon, and the ubiquity of smartphones, which nowadays have become the new norm. Yet his urgent questions seem to suggest that he was intuiting such as possibility. "Merton asked if technology would usher in a new kind of jungle, an electronic labyrinth."[245] As Ellul adamantly points out in his work, the currency upon which technology develops is efficiency. The more there is of it, the more of it it begets, even at the cost of moral subversions. Undoubtedly, society has been succumbing more than ever to an identification with *efficient* terms (hence Ellul calling it *The Technological Society)*, burgeoning innovation and technology orientations that are now threatening the social fabric to become a lifeless *Scientia*. Paul R.

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[241] William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton encyclopedia* s.v. "Technology" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

[242] Thomas Merton, *Learning to Love. Exploring Solitude and Freedom* (Journals 6: 1966-67; ed. Christine M. Bochen; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 222.

[243] William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton encyclopedia* s.v. "Technology" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

[244] ibid.

[245] Paul R. Dekar, "What the Machine Produces and What the Machine Destroys: Thomas Merton on Technology," *Merton Annual* 17, (November 2004), 227.

Dekar says of Merton that "he cautioned that an uncritical embrace of science and technology distorts our true humanity. He believed that, by regarding scientists and technologists as arbiters of the future, humankind ceases fully to love God, self and neighbor."[246] Merton here is prophesying against the mystique of these arbiters, a mystique promulgating an illusive hope in rationality and artificiality, with the ever looming promise of a possibly greater efficiency; in view of this hope he says that these arbiters' minds "seem to be light, but they battle together in impenetrable moral darkness."[247] Their mystique is one upon which a Philosophical and an Empirical *Scientia* continue to be hijacked and transformed to exploit one of the greatest and most capacious life-giving sources, the capacity for a "disinterested and unconditional divine love,"[248] contemplation, the forbidden fruit of the tree of life.[249]

"Merton helps unveil for us, therefore, the same mystique that continues to anesthetize our twenty-first-century experience and alienate us from the *real* world that touches our deepest 'ground of being.'"[250] In this regard he asks, "Does it occur to us that if, in fact, we live in a society which is par excellence that of the *simulacrum*, we are the champion idolaters of all history?"[251] Merton seemingly asks this question in the light of a projected limitlessness, over the capacities and potencies that are being mined by an increasingly developing Philosophical and Empirical *Scientia*.

A Philosophical *Scientia*, since it peaks to a archetypal world governed by mathematics, when inordinately exercised, it has the capacity to *negate* all Ordinary, Biblical and Mystical *Sapientia* to bargain on what the Cartesian mindset has to offer. It has enough capacity to

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[246]   ibid., 223.

[247]   Thomas Merton, *Zen and the birds of appetite* (Boston: Shambhala, 1993), 82.

[248]   Constitutions of the Carmelite order 1995, IV, 61, accessed April 12, 2017, http://www.carmelites.ie/Constitutions.pdf

[249]   cf. Gen 3:22

[250]   Gordon Oyer, "Confronting the Myth of Human Progress: Thomas Merton and the Illusion of Privilege," *Merton Annual* 28, (November 2015), 152.

[251]   Thomas Merton, Faith and violence: *Christian teaching and Christian practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 152.

transpose one's deepest 'ground of being' to focus on answering an inordinate *how* question, leading one then to identify his inmost being with a theoretical view of the world, one which at the most fundamental level is relative and mathematical. Of this problem Merton says that "it is not difficult for the abstract and scientific doctrines of modern humanism to become means by which the individual person is reduced to subjection to man in the abstract. [In fact,] they are so abstract that they easily lend themselves to narcissistic and idolatrous interpretations."[252] He directly confronts this problem especially with reference to the Cogito of Descartes, saying,

> Nothing could be more alien to contemplation than the cogito ergo sum of Descartes. "I think, therefore I am." This is the declaration of an alienated being, in exile from his own spiritual depths, compelled to seek some comfort in a proof for his own existence (!) based on the observation that he "thinks." If his thought is necessary as a medium through which he arrives at the concept of his existence, then he is in fact only moving further away from his true being. He is reducing himself to a concept. He is making it impossible for himself to experience, directly and immediately, the mystery of his own being. At the same time, by also reducing God to a concept, he makes it impossible for himself to have any intuition of the divine reality which is inexpressible. He arrives at his own being as if it were an objective reality, that is to say he strives to become aware of himself as he would of some "thing" alien to himself. And he proves that the "thing" exists. He convinces himself: "I am therefore some thing." And then he goes on to convince himself that God, the infinite, the transcendent, is also a "thing," an "object," like other finite and limited objects of our thought![253]

An Empirical *Scientia*, on the other hand, since it peaks to an astute understanding of the dichotomy between what is scientific and nonscientific, when inordinately exercised, it has the capacity to plunge oneself into perpetual doubt and cynicism, leading oneself to identify with a bottomless dichotomy of a world operative in dualities. It has enough capacity to transpose one's deepest 'ground of being' to focus on answering an inordinate *how-we-come-to-know* question, identifying one's being then with a disconnect, artificial universal view of the world, a world without root causes, sustaining one into a 'metamodern sensibility to both a progressive and a religious occupation.' But the problem of dualities is generally a Western

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[252]   Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton. Stone, *Love and living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 148-9.

[253]   Thomas Merton, *New seeds of contemplation* (London: Burns and Oates, 2003), 8.

problem, even in the exercise of theology; it is for this reason that Merton also turns to eastern religions for an understanding, saying,

> Zen seeks the direct, immediate view in which the experience of a subject-object duality is destroyed. That is why Zen resolutely refuses to answer clearly, abstractly, or dogmatically any religious or philosophical questions whatever.[254]

A dualistic orientation to life forfeits the essential qualities of both a Religious *Scientia* and Mystical *Sapientia*, as it seeks to put everything in control under oneself, under one's judgement of truth, in an illusive disconnect, in the false comfort of alienation. In the development of an understanding of Religious *Scientia* there are cited exemplars like Augustine, who says, that, "all rational knowledge, including knowledge of God and of Truth, is dependent on revealed Truth. Rational knowledge therefore requires revelation as its prerequisite."[255] This prerequisite, therefore, if also put into question as if it is something below oneself, and hence, if put in duel with other rational knowledge, it will imply then, according to Augustine, that one cannot be rational at all. In Aquinas, Stump says that, "it isn't surprising to find him paying less attention to how we know we're not mistaken or deceived or how we keep from being in those undesirable states and more attention to how we use our cognitive capacities in gaining truth."[256] Finally, we see in Teilhard de Chardin the capacity to hold on to paradoxical truth informed both by a theology of the Universal Christ and the Theory of Evolution, that is, both by Revelation and modern science.

In the development of an understanding of Mystical *Sapientia* we find two kinds of doubters, having a very fine line between them, as they both aim at destroying projections of God and other superficial fantasies. On the one hand we find Nietzsche, Freud, Feuerbach and Dawkins, and on the other we find, John of the Cross, Certeau and Rahner. The previous

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[254] Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, "Society and the inner self," *The inner experience* (HarperCollins, 2012).

[255] Derek Seckington, *Divine illumination and revelation: The Augustinian Theory of Knowledge (*Australia: Beryl Seckington, 2005), 140.

[256] Eleonore Stump, "Aquinas on the Foundations of Knowledge," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21, no. sup1 (1991), 151.

advocate that 'God is dead' while the latter show that God is nowhere to be found in dead

religious categories. In view of the 'God is dead' movement and such a religion Merton says,

> Nietzsche's declaration that 'God is dead' is one that is now taken up, not without seriousness, by the prophets of the most 'progressive' tendencies in Western religion, which now seems, in some quarters, eager to prove its sincerity, in the eyes of a godless society, by an act of spiritual self-destruction.
> Meanwhile, artists, poets, and others who might be expected to have some concern with the inner life of man are declaring that the reason why God has ceased to be present to man (therefore 'dead') is that man has ceased to be present to himself [(alienation)], and that consequently the true significance of the statement 'God is dead' is really that 'MAN is dead.' The obvious fact of man's material agitation and external frenzy serves only to emphasise his lack of spiritual life.[257]

For this reason, "in spite of the Christian elements that survive in the West, Merton believed

that he lived in an essentially atheistic society."[258] This is all the more clear and normative in

our times with society being on the brink of a *scientific* life. Society is proclaiming an

'undisputable trust in research and innovation' while making sure to ignore its marginal poets

and artists, who are its *prophets*. For Merton, all this also means a total mistrust in God's

heavenly messengers, saying,

> The much advertised 'death of God' - that 'absence' which is one of the most significant features of our modern world - is no doubt due in large part to our incapacity to hear the voices of heavenly messengers. We have forgotten how to trust these strangers, and because of our suspicion we have denied them. Mistrust in the Lord begins therefore with mistrust of his messengers.[259]

This, cannot but lead society to finally mistrust itself as being really free, and therefore,

> We have renounced the act of being and plunged ourselves into process for its own sake. We no longer know how to live, and because we cannot accept life in its reality, life ceases to be a joy and becomes an affliction.[260]

Here, Merton is prophetically "telling people who *think* they're free that they're [in reality]

slaves,"[261] that we are all the more renouncing our God-given freedom in a world submitting

itself to *systematic* processes. The world thinks of itself as gaining more freedom by growing

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[257] Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton. Stone, *Love and living* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), 56.

[258] Paul R. Dekar, "What the Machine Produces and What the Machine Destroys: Thomas Merton on Technology," Merton Annual 17, (November 2004), 226.

[259] "The Angel and the Machine." Merton Seasonal 22., (Spring, 1997):6, 3.

[260] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 222.

[261] Thomas Merton, *The springs of contemplation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 133.

and feeding on such processes. 'Life is ceasing to be a joy, and is becoming a hopeless affliction by this.' That is why Merton in commenting on *The Technological Society*, says of Ellul, "... but he thinks the situation is desperate and that we have not yet begun to do anything serious about it."[262]

> How few people really face the problem! It is the most portentous and apocalyptical thing of all, that we are caught in an automatic self-determining system in which man's choices have largely ceased to count. (The existentialist's freedom in a void seems to imply a despairing recognition of this plight, but it says and does nothing.)[263]

Paul R. Dekar says that, "Merton traced the sources of this illness to ideas prevalent in the nineteenth century when people came to believe in indefinite progress, in the supreme goodness of the human person and in the capacity of science and technology to achieve infinite good."[264] Ellul, in fact, describes the nineteenth century as formative of very close links "between scientific research and technical invention."[265]

Merton, however, while appearing very critical, just as Ellul, of such inevitable happenings, he was in reality exercising himself in the context of a much greater monastic project, that of searching for ways of a possible recovery of the contemplative dimension in the Church, which he saw as very much threatened by the growing ethos of the Western world. He, therefore, moved into this direction not only by critiquing the world and the Church, but also by shedding new light on the possibility of a beyond, by pointing us to signs of God's love working in ordinary reality, present in every encounter, in every happening; signs revealing of Ordinary *Sapientia*, saying,

> In an age of science and technology, in which [we] find [ourselves] bewildered and disoriented by the fabulous versatility of the machines [we have] created, we live precipitated outside ourselves at every moment, interiorly empty, spiritually lost ... At such a time as this, it seems absurd to talk of contemplation ... The contemplative is not just a [person] who sits under a

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262 William H. Shannon, Christine M. Bochen, and Patrick F. O'Connell, *The Thomas Merton encyclopedia* s.v. "Technology" (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

263 Thomas Merton and Robert E. Daggy, *Dancing in the water of life: seeking peace in the hermitage* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 161.

264 Paul R. Dekar, "What the Machine Produces and What the Machine Destroys: Thomas Merton on Technology," *Merton Annual* 17, (November 2004), 231.

265 Jacques Ellul, John Wilkinson, and Robert King Merton, *The technological society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 45.

tree with legs crossed, or one who edifies [herself or] himself with the answer to ultimate and spiritual problems. He [or she] is one who seeks to know the meaning of life not only with [one's] head but with [one's] whole being, by living it in depth and in purity, and thus uniting himself to the very Source of Life. ... the whole world and all the incidents of life tend to be sacraments—signs of God, signs of [God's] love working in the world.[266]

4.2 Merton Showing us *Sapientia* in the Paradisiacal Breadth of the 'Vision of Louisville'

> Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. … I suppose the big problem would be that we would fall down and worship each other. But this cannot be seen, only believed and 'understood' by a peculiar gift.[267]

Here, Merton is expressive of his most changing realisation, summoned by the 'Vision of Louisville', which disclosed to him the *hidden* way possible in ordinary life, also for the fulfillment of the Beatitudes of Jesus, and the universal teachings of love prevalent in the New Testament. In other words, it was the birth of Ordinary *Sapientia* in his life, that revelation of wisdom that is already in everybody, hidden, irrespective of whether one is Christian or atheist, good or bad, faithful or idolatrous. "Insofar as we can understand something of the wisdom [of others] ..., it is because we already have some wisdom within us, either potentially or actually."[268] The manifestation of Ordinary *Sapientia*, therefore, was for Merton that graceful entry point for *true* communion with God and all peoples. From that moment on, he could also unconditionally identify himself with all the marginals, poets and artists, also recognising in some of them the *true* gift of prophecy, irrespective of their content of faith and beliefs. Merton expresses this revealed truth as *le point vierge,* representative of a true catholicity, one that affirms the goodness of God in all people.

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[266] Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, *The literary essays of Thomas Merton* (New York: New Directions, 1985), 339.

[267] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 156.

[268] William Lowell Randall et al., *Ordinary wisdom: biographical aging and the journey of life* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001), 11.

Again, that expression, *le point vierge*, (I cannot translate it) comes in here. At the center of our being is a point of nothingness which is untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God, which is never at our disposal, from which God disposes of our lives, which is inaccessible to the fantasies of our own mind or the brutalities of our own will. This little point of nothingness and of *absolute poverty* is the pure glory of God in us. It is so to speak His name written in us, as our poverty, as our indigence, as our dependence, as our sonship. … It is only given. But the gate of heaven is everywhere.[269]

But is not Western Christianity, if not the whole West, also appreciative of 'the Beatitudes of Jesus, and the universal teachings of love prevalent in the New Testament?' The vast majority of society approve of such virtues and ideals. In fact, we are nowadays living in a more inclusive society, one that dignifies the marginalised and the less privileged. Why is our society all the more fragmenting then? Why do we find it incomprehensible having to renounce our personal dominion to truly accept Jesus as our saviour? Why do we find it so difficult to really be guided by the Beatitudes at heart? Although these are in reality all-time questions, there must be answers that are peculiar to our age. Our prevalent metamodern sensibility towards a religious occupation suggests, that, although we are recognising our susceptibility to alienation and the need for God, we are nevertheless attempting to transcend our limitations by our own power in a vacuum, with our made-up religion, *Scientia*. "It cannot ossify completely into characteristically naïve religious conceptions before it crumbles again under critical scrutiny back to atheism."[270] To make it worse, some Christians, "moved by the desire to share the condition of their fellow-men, … [are] proclaim[ing] the need for a certain measure of unbelief as a necessary basis for any fully human sincerity,"[271] says Merton. The qualities of a Religious *Scientia* are being incapacitated by a sincerity operative in disconnect!

A kind of schizophrenic self-alienation lies at the source of all the inadequate mysticisms of heroism and of guilt. The longing of the restless spirit of man, seeking to transcend itself by its own powers, is symbolized by the need to scale the impossible mountain and find there what is after all our own. When a man writes good poetry, it comes from within himself. But

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[269] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 158.

[270] "[Re]construction: Metamodern 'Transcendence' and the Return of Myth," Notes on Metamodernism, , accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/10/21/reconstruction-metamodern-transcendence-and-the-return-of-myth/.

[271] Thomas Merton and Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith," *Thomas Merton: spiritual master: the essential writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 428.

> there have been poets who could only reach the sources within themselves when they thought they were defying the gods in order to drink from the hidden spring.[272]

Here Merton, in referencing the hidden spring, is pointing to the fact that man is still desirous of contemplation, still desires God, irrespective of his situation, but all this, without wanting to let go of his defiance, without wanting to renounce control over himself, and therefore, without letting God be the initiator and source of all contemplation. The modern man is trying to produce the effects of God's grace all by himself, and for himself. Merton traces the roots of this problem in the fall of Adam, saying, that it "was the first step in that self-alienation which resulted from man's refusal to accept himself as he actually is - a refusal which constitutes the very essence of original sin,"[273] that which keeps us separate at heart from God. In our being separate from God, we as a consequence in our time, increasingly subjecting ourselves to "process for its own sake,"[274] which is what also led to "the total collapse of the depth model."[275] In the modern world, therefore, God came to be seen instead as an obstacle to ordinary wisdom, hence the culmination of the 'God is dead' movement and Nietzsche's statements about Christianity. Even the madman could not figure how God "has bled under our knives."[276] It is therefore clear, that, only in the primordial innocence of Adam before the fall, in true contemplation, that man can fully relate again with God in the way God created man to relate with Him and others.

> For [man], then, to live would mean to 'be inspired'-to see things as God saw them, to love them as He loved them, to be moved in all things ecstatically by the Spirit of God. And so for Adam ecstasy was by no means a violent interruption of the usual routine of life. There could be no violence, no alienation in such a life: in Paradise ecstasy in normal.[277]

> Humanity, which was one image of God in Adam, or, if you prefer, one single 'mirror' of the divine nature, was shattered into millions of fragments by the original sin which alienated each

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[272] Thomas Merton, *The new man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 18.
[273] ibid., 42.
[274] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 222.
[275] "[Re]construction: Metamodern 'Transcendence' and the Return of Myth," Notes on Metamodernism, , accessed February 28, 2017, http://www.metamodernism.com/2015/10/21/reconstruction-metamodern-transcendence-and-the-return-of-myth/.
[276] M. J. Buckley, "Atheism and Contemplation," *Theological Studies* 40, no. 4 (1979): 681 doi:10.1177/004056397904000402.
[277] Thomas Merton, *The new man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 30.

man from God, from other men and from himself. But the broken mirror becomes once again a perfectly united image of God in the union of those who are in Christ. Thus, in Christ, 'God reunites His whole creation, including matter, but especially man, in a new economy of salvation. He gathers up His entire work from the very beginning to purify and sanctify it in His Incarnate Son, the new Adam.'[278]

In the light of all this, then, the 'Vision of Louisville' constituted Merton's received capacity to transcend in Christ the ever present alienating limitations inherent in all fallen human nature, at least for an instant. By the power of Grace he could catch a glimpse of the beginning of beginnings; he was made able to see in other people what only few had ever seen in Christ. In his experience Merton shows us, as in a mirror, Ordinary *Sapientia* entering his abode,[279] the way it moved about in his life, and the way it transformed his vision. But as the New Testament cannot be really understood without the Old Testament, the new covenant without the old covenant, the same is with Ordinary *Sapientia*; it cannot be really understood without its other sister qualities in Biblical and Mystical *Sapientia*. In fact, it is in these, I believe, the key to an understanding of why we are finding it so hard to renounce ourselves to follow Christ in this age, and to really let ourselves be wholly guided by the Beatitudes of Jesus; it is here, I believe, the key to an appreciation of Merton's capacity for transcendence from the riddle of alienation; and it is also here where Merton stands as a great prophet and exemplar for our age.

4.3 The Way of Becoming what We are Really Meant 'To Be'

Contemporary society, as already alluded, is not only approving of the qualities of Ordinary *Sapientia*, but also announcing them as in a show of mercy; such qualities seem to have found a prominent place in the measure of societal success. In fact, the terms 'inclusion' and 'justice' are nowadays abounding in political discourse, but are they truly and essentially what they represent? If not, what distinguishes the actual from these then? The first and more familiar

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[278]   ibid., 87-8.
[279]   cf. Rev 3:20

answer to this question must be evident in the immediate view of the fabric of our society. Certainly, the dominant narrative of our society has long ceased to be one which finds its centre in an otherworldly dimension. At best, its centre is a naturalistic one, one whose justification ends in research, innovation and science. People are coming together in circles of compassion(?) but not necessarily of enduring authenticity. But this is more clear by the way we are experiencing ourselves as related to one another.

Merton draws a distinction between the individual and the person, the collective and the community. Individuals, when they come together, they form a collective, one "of empty and alienated human beings who have lost their centre and extinguished their own inner light in order to depend in abject passivity upon the mass in which they cohere without affectivity or intelligent purpose."[280] Persons, on the other hand, when they come together, they form a community, one "linked with brothers and sisters in the unity of all that makes them human and in a sharing of all that makes them one in Christ. … Persons find in the community the place for solitude and therefore for contemplation."[281]

> Whereas the individual is absorbed in the stereotype, the person is conformed to the archetype who is Christ[282]

A collectivity believes it can reach to universal truth without in reality having a centre and being rooted anywhere, without a story of *salvation*, with the consequence of ending up revering its own stereotypical story. A community, on the other hand, cannot help but remember its unique *salvific* story, and its roots, when openly relating in itself and sharing in the story of other communities. In this same breadth of a view, it is also by their unique story that communities can truly enter the greatest story of Salvation, the Bible, and taste of its abundant wisdom, Biblical *Sapientia*. In Biblical *Sapientia*, different communities can come

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[280] Thomas Merton, *Disputed questions* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), X.
[281] William Henry Shannon, *Thomas Merton: (an introduction)* (Cincinnati (Ohio): St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2005), 96.
[282] ibid.

together to continually discover in themselves and others the common salvific roots of Revelation, which is the special mirror of God, and which reflects for them the One True Archetype, Christ, in Whom, and by Whom, they can become one Mystical Body. But this is realised not merely by the study and recitation of biblical verses, but mainly by identification, especially with the concrete story of Israel, the people chosen by God, whose wisdom 'specially demanded a movement from law principles to personification, from obedience of the law to a personal relationship with God,' and whose journey sheds light on all the struggles, unfaithfulness, contradictions, but also God's faithfulness and love for His people, until the revelation of God Himself, The Word, Christ, in the hope of His coming again gloriously. A sapiential possibility, therefore, lies in our capacity to identify with the hidden Christ, by conforming to His Archetype, in the hope of His coming again gloriously. Our time is a both or in-between, an arrived-but-not-yet time.

> When you and I become what we are really meant to be, we will discover not only that we love one another perfectly but that we are both living in Christ and Christ in us, and we are all One Christ. We will see that it is He Who loves in us.[283]

Thomas Merton, in his entering deeper in the roots of the monastic life, saw the Bible as having been central to a life of prayer for the Desert Fathers and the monks of oriental churches, saying, "prayer was drawn from Scriptures, especially from the Psalms. The first monks looked upon the Psalter ... as a book of special efficacy for the ascetic life, in that it revealed the secret movements of the heart in its struggle against the forces of darkness."[284] The Old *Scientia* (ascetical life) of his Trappist monastery, and that of general monasticism must find their roots also in this biblical dimension. But with the coming and going of traditions in time, these roots surely got wearied, if not disfigured to the point of insufficiency at times. But Merton did not choose to throw away the whole of monasticism and open the Bible afresh for himself to solve this problem. For him it was crucial that these roots be rediscovered anew, and continue to be

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[283]   Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New Directions, 2007), 67.

[284]   Thomas Merton, *Contemplative prayer* (New York: Image Books/Doubleday Religion, 1971), 20.

rediscovered from the present moment, from where we have arrived so far. This, perhaps, also sheds light on why Merton, in order to reach back fully to the world hidden with *Sapientia*, kept faithful to the end in his vocation as a monk. He understood that he could not flee his roots, as a Christian, Catholic, monk, and Trappist, to accomplish universally the way he did and is still doing. Cunningham says, that, "Merton, in short, was capable of entering the larger world of cultural discourse while rooted in a tradition that gave a peculiar weight and a ring of authenticity to his words."[285]

> As a monk, Merton sought to share the wisdom of the monastic and mystical traditions that he had incorporated into his own life, first with the ordinary American Christians outside the monastery, those who were not religious professionals of any sort, and then with an increasingly broad and international group of believers and religious seekers of all kinds. While Merton's earlier writing betrays some crude distinctions between monastery and city, church and world, the supernatural and the natural, his incarnational and sacramental vision, rooted in the ancient traditions of Christianity, led to an ever wider breadth and openness in his religious thought and writing. He moved from reflection on the Christian tradition in its depth to include study and intuitive appreciation of the contemplative dimensions of Shaker spirituality, Russian orthodoxy, Taoism, Buddhism, especially Zen, and Hinduism, Islamic Sufism, even the cargo cults of the south Pacific, all understood as part of the wisdom of the human family.[286]

Here, Merton, by the way he has lived his vocation, he is a prophet in the sense of acting as a sign of contradiction in the face of a falsely proclaimed Ordinary *Sapientia*, the way it is cherished by Western society today. He indirectly but strongly avers, by his life, that Ordinary *Sapientia* cannot be true to itself without claiming for itself any personal *salvific* story whatsoever. Surely, in the case of Merton, it is in his peculiar way of entering deeper into monasticism, and therefore, in his way of entering Biblical *Sapientia* from his own monastery, that he was born truly in Ordinary *Sapientia* and Ordinary *Sapientia* in him. As Christians we believe that the Bible is the surest form of Revelation, and therefore, we must regard Biblical *Sapientia* as also the surest form of revealed wisdom. But one may ask, what are the signs of the times that are begging for a rediscovery of Biblical *Sapientia* and the recognition of the

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[285] Thomas Merton and Lawrence S. Cunningham, *Thomas Merton: spiritual master: the essential writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 31.

[286] ibid., 6.

superfluity of a disconnectedly cherished Ordinary *Sapientia*. I believe that signs are generally presenting themselves in the prevalent sense of an *absence*, which points us to the third character of wisdom, Mystical *Sapientia*.

Thomas Merton describes this 'prevalent sense of absence' "as one of the most significant features of our modern world,"[287] which is also related to our "perceived absence of God."[288] It is also what makes the structure of feeling of metamodernism an in-between or nothing state. But this is not something unique to our age or the metamodernist era. In mystical theology, the absence of which Merton is referring to is called the "apophatic experience of God."[289] Therefore, what Merton is actually saying by absence, is that, God, in our age, is speaking to us more in his absence than his presence; that in the perceived absence, God is prompting the hearts of man to never settle passively in a lifeless system, but always remember of a beyond that can be known in love, in unknowing. Therefore, this absence can be translated to many a situation into the figure of *Sapientia* 'turned away crying, echoing a certain restlessness, prompting men to call upon her name, and to relate with her once again. Unfortunately, upon hearing her cries, most men are instead trying to silence her altogether.' That is why "John of the Cross declares that, though passing mystical graces are the lot of the many, a state of contemplation is given to few."[290] Although the real reason to this truth lies with God Himself, what is shown figuratively is that, deep, somewhere in the hearts of most men, there must be a No by which God is rendered powerless to give Himself directly and totally, and hence, granting a state of contemplation.

In our time, one cannot speak of mysticism without the ever rising phenomenon of atheism, because as apparent in the articulation of Mystical *Sapientia*, there can be only a fine

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[287] "The Angel and the Machine." *Merton Seasonal* 22., (Spring, 1997):6, 3.
[288]   John Moses, *Divine discontent: the prophetic voice of Thomas Merton* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 189.
[289] Thomas Merton, "The contemplative and the atheist," *Contemplation in a world of action* (Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 168.
[290] Ruth OCD. Burrows, *Guidelines for mystical prayer* (New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1980), 57.

line between the two orientation states. Mystics, sometimes, in their profound sense of God being absent, can be led to perceive themselves as atheists interiorly. Thérèse of Lisieux (1873-97 AD), a Carmelite mystic, had to endure such an experience, "but she also knew that one could not simply will a belief."[291] She knew that only God can be the initiator and giver of contemplation. In her waiting for God, she perceived only aridity, absence and a looming death. On the other hand, Merton well observes, in an essay he wrote called *The Contemplative and the Atheist*, that,

> We are persuaded that many who consider themselves atheists are in fact persons who are discontented with a naive idea of God which makes him appear to be an 'object' or a 'thing,' or a person in a merely finite and human sense. Such people are perhaps weary of the complications of language which now surround the 'problem of God' and find all discussions of that problem fruitless: yet they are likely to be very intrigued by the direct and existential testimony of contemplative experience.[292]

In *The Inner Experience* Merton also says that,

> It is clear that if a dialogue is to take place between Christians and the subjectivists of our time, a contemplative is the one to speak for Christianity. A dogmatist, firmly entrenched in scholastic [(dead?)] categories, has no way to speak for Christianity.[293]

Here, Merton is emphasising the contemplative over the dogmatist in his view of how conceptual structures (perceiving structures) are fast changing in a world embracing an over-development of *Scientia*, with the consequence that, old tradition/religious/societal narratives are also being torn down to abstract insignificance due to all this, suffering an irreparable loss of depth. Scholastic categories, therefore, cannot convey a depth of rediscovery in our age, as they are generally being received abstractly, and argued on a par with other conceptual knowledge; a similar thing is happening with religious language and liturgical symbols.

> The contemplative … has a certain advantage due to the fact that he is less involved than others in changing conceptual structures and less dependent on the complexities of language.[294]

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291 Thomas R. Nevin, *Thérèse of Lisieux: God's gentle warrior* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006).
292 Thomas Merton, "The contemplative and the atheist," *Contemplation in a world of action* (Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 168.
293 Thomas Merton and Patrick Hart, "Some Dangers," *The inner experience* (HarperCollins, 2012).
294 Thomas Merton, "The contemplative and the atheist," *Contemplation in a world of action* (Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 172.

Merton is saying with a prophetic voice, that, it is wiser to combat modern alienation (which is steeped in *Scientia*) with a knowledge that is higher than *Scientia*, with a wisdom reaped in unknowing, in contemplation, with the *sapor boni* of *Sapientia*. The dominant ways of Philosophical and Empirical *Scientia* are continuously subjecting the qualities of Religious *Scientia* to a divisive threat by their expropriations, qualities which must in the end hold in nothing but the Truth, the essence of God Himself; this is nothing but the paradoxical way of the cross. That is why Merton says, "like Jonas himself I find myself traveling toward my destiny in the belly of a paradox."[295] Without the contemplative dimension, Religious *Scientia* cannot truly hold, and hence why all the riddle to Ordinary, Biblical and Mystical Sapientia in this age. In a beautiful literary letter titled *Ignea Sagitta*, Nicholas the Frenchman poetically expresses the essence of a life and fruit of a religion steeped in contemplation:

> As long as you persevered in solitude in your contemplations, your prayers and holy exercises, with profit to yourselves, the renown or your holiness, wafted abroad like a perfume, far and wide, over city and town, brought wonderful comfort to all those it reached; and it attracted many, in those days, to the solitude of the desert, edified by its fragrance, and drawn, as though by a cord of tenderness, to repent of their misdeeds.[296]

Similar to Nicholas the Frenchman, Merton sees solitude as crucial to contemplation, and the contemplative experience as essential to effective ministry. These are communal qualities that are finding themselves in acute danger in our individualist age, even in the Church, with Christian communities being pushed to become superficial collectives. That is why Karl Rahner said, "the devout Christian of the future will be either a 'mystic', one who has 'experienced' something, or he will cease to be anything at all."[297] The mystic is one who seeks God first in his own desert and solitude, with an asceticism directed at quieting his/her abode from any alienating currents that can prevent him/her from hearing the exalted Christ knocking

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[295] Thomas Merton, *The sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981), 11.
[296] Nicholas the Frenchman, "The Flaming Arrow (Ignea Sagitta)," trans. Bede Edwards, *The Sword* 39 (1979), III, 6.
[297] Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol.7, Further Theology of the Spiritual Life, trans David Bourke (New York, Herder and Herder, 1971), 15.

on his/her door; the mystic's greatest desire is to open the door immediately if s/he hears Him knocking, so that He will come in and eat with him/her and s/he with He, in contemplation.[298] The mystic, however, desires this not simply for his/her benefit but mainly for the benefit of his/her community, and also for the Church at large; furthermore, the mystic is one who abides by a hidden centre in God, a centre fully known in love, in a transforming christocentricity, with Christ as living Wisdom, Mystical *Sapientia*. Merton expresses this centre as,

> The grace of Christ identifies me with the 'engrafted word' (*insitum verbum*) which is Christ living in me. *Vivit in me Christus.* Identification by love leads to knowledge, recognition, intimate and obscure but vested with an inexpressible certainty known only in contemplation.[299]

Christopher Pramuk sheds light on these mystical qualities in the particularities of Merton's life, saying,

> While even the most casual readers can be dazzled (or scandalized) by the universal scope of Merton's vision, what is not always appreciated is the christocentric character of his catholicity, that is, his personal communion with Christ as the center and heart of all reality. In other words, the center held for Merton because he never ceased deepening his understanding of Jesus Christ at the heart of the Christian tradition, nor did he compromise his daily adherence as a monk to Christian faith, prayer, and praxis. … The features of Merton's mature Christology [can be traced] in his view of Christ as Wisdom of God, the unknown and unseen Sophia, in whom the cosmos is created and sustained. It was in no small part due to this Christology that Merton was able to affirm the other *as other*, that is, to say yes to them, and to do so well ahead of mainstream Christian or Catholic 'inclusivism'.[300]

4.4 Entering the Prophetic Mission of Thomas Merton through his *way* of Engaging *Scientia* for an Encounter with *Sapientia*

By his life and writings, Merton wanted to lead us in the way he had previously interiorised and suffered, the way in which he prophetically foresaw the possibilities for us, even before the full formation of the perceiving structures of this age. Merton knew very well the captivating forces of *Scientia*, and its roots, as he himself pushed to the limits the

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[298] cf. Rev 3:20
[299] Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in solitude* (New York: RosettaBooks, 2005), 39.
[300] Christopher Pramuk, *Sophia: the hidden Christ of Thomas Merton* (Collegeville, MN.: Liturgical, 2015), 2.

expressiveness of language, the most versatile *Scientia*. In fact, upon entering the Trappist Monastery he saw the power of language as dangerous to a life of contemplation. His first reaction was to evade writing altogether. But at that time, little did he know that it is by the power of language that he was to prophetically communicate to us the signs of the unseen depths of the Wisdom of God, Christ, *Sapientia*.

The prophetic life of Thomas Merton sheds light on *the* possible way through, in an age of peculiar alienation, the riddle of much *Scientia*. He helps us realise that we ought not rebelling against *Scientia* when we glimpse its impenetrable aridity and a sense of absence, of which we ourselves are partly responsible; but dare finding instead the wisdom and courage to go beyond it, in unknowing, in contemplation. He shows us by his own life that we ought instead to embrace *Scientia*, to interrogate it, to uncover its roots, also to firmly ground ourselves in its age-old roots, especially those biblical, however, not to idolatrise them or fixing ourselves to the answers they can give. This is because the ultimate answer lies hidden with *Sapientia* in our hearts; it is one that can only be communicated to us mystically. In our knowing and unknowing, we must therefore fix our ears to hear *Sapientia* knocking on the door of our peculiar alienation, so that if She comes we would let Her in without waiting, to eat with us and us with Her. It is only in such an encounter that we can really know what She has to say us, what our ultimate answer is, but this, to be true in itself, must remain for the person experiencing it an inexpressible secret of the heart. Merton is revealing of this hidden encounter by the way he entered the ordinary life of people following 'The Vision of Louisville', in transformative love. It was in no ordinary way however that he could do this, but in the paradoxical way of Christ, the perfect Transcender, The Way in Whom Merton must have travelled. In Christ, Merton shows us how to be fully in the world, but not of the world, how to live fully under *Scientia* to go beyond it, to perfect it, to make "meaningful statements about

reality without making comprehensive statements about them."[301] In this way, he also shows us the way of daring interrogating all forms of knowledge, even those beyond our religious confines and comfort areas, without being afraid; but these he could perform not in a spirit of idealism, but by a perfect love that drives out all fear,[302] a liberating love disclosed in intimacy with *Sapientia* (Ordinary, Biblical and Mystical), that which Jesus Christ won for us on the paradoxical cross. Merton summed up the end of his prophetic vocation expressed in writing in the words,

> Whatever I may have written, I think all can be reduced in the end to this one root truth: that God calls human persons to union with Himself and with one another in Christ.[303]

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[301] Ravi Zacharias,What about those who don't believe in God?, August 01, 2011, accessed April 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZLzLVAUJiU.

[302] cf. 1 John 4:18

[303] Thomas Merton, A Statement Concerning the Collection in the Bellarmine College Library, 14-15, in The Thomas Merton Studies Center

Conclusion

The progression through the chapters of this study, as already noted, took the form of an itinerary of rediscovery of Wisdom as proceeding from surface to depth, from an abstract view of this age to a living interpretation of it, primarily treating of the riddle inherent in a life of *Scientia*, to taste again of the abundant life of *Sapientia*. The first chapter treated particularly of the way our society is experiencing itself, as aspiring and moving forward, delineating three views in the form of dominant perspectives. The first two perspectives expounded on research and innovation, and technology, especially in how they are being perceived as neutral to society, and the way they are being exercised uncritically, and hence, are leading society to more fragmentation. The third perspective treated of the structure of feeling as described by the proponents of metamodernism, shedding light particularly on how we are trying to reach to universalism by relativism, transcendence without being rooted anywhere, knowledge without having any wisdom. The second chapter then, focussed on the problems inherent in these perspectives in terms of means and ends, represented as *Scientia* and *Sapientia*. Since these terms are in themselves pregnant with meaning, this study sought to bring to light core aspects of each, from historical moments, as having developed in the various strata, and as contributory to an understanding of their current movements. Moving to a personal interpretation of these aspects then, the third chapter focussed on a person, Thomas Merton, particularly by the way he interiorised and witnessed against the glorious *Scientia* of our time, even by his being considered many as a prophet to our age. His journey of growth shed light on the journey to the depths of *Scientia* as being found by *Sapientia*, modelled both by his life and by the way the directly engaged these. Through his life and writings it was shown that the dominant crisis he sought to prophetically address, is primarily the cause of a peculiar alienation from God,

ourselves, and others. Finally, then, in the fourth chapter, core elements from all chapters were brought together to form a synthesis of hope, a sapiential possibility, one that points in the direction where *Sapientia* dwells and can be found again seeking after our hearts.

In essence, this work tried to give a voice to a deep intuiting that is being described by many as an absence, a loss, one that is appearing as having no root cause, and hence impenetrable to the perceiving structures of this age. Given that our age is increasingly one of answers and facts (a life of *Scientia*), that of the *Simulacrum*, as Merton describes it, this structure of feeling cannot but stir in discontentment deep in the heart of society. Society is trying hard to quench this sense of absence by the gull of innovative solutions, new technologies, instant remedies and the creation of new knowledge, also seeking to frame a false hope by these; but deep in the heart of the collective, *Sapientia* is revealing an otherwise, the truth of a thirst that is unquenchable by these waters, one, whose satisfying waters cannot be found in any of these things. Man, deep in his heart, is verging on the desperate upon glimpsing this truth, and in his rebellious nature he is 'instead trying to silence Her (*Sapientia*) altogether,' thinking that he can content himself by the waters of his alienation.

The core essence of this posture, Merton eloquently described as by *the* way of doing good poetry, saying, "When a man writes good poetry, it comes from within himself. But there have been poets who could only reach the sources within themselves when they thought they were defying the gods in order to drink from the hidden spring."[304] The good poet, representative of all those whom Merton saw as capable of contemplation, and hence of a relationship with God, drinks from the spring that wells up within him as freely initiated and provided by God Himself, also by accepting himself the way he actually is in relation to God; the bad poet, on the other hand, in his envying God, he wants to be like God and thinks of himself as only capable of drinking from God's hidden spring when he defeats God. He does

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[304] Thomas Merton, *The new man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 18.

not know that in doing this he is exchanging living water with the stale water of his own alienation. It is the task of the prophet, said Merton, to rock the boat of this deceitful exchange into realisation, "by telling the people who *think* they're free that they are [actually] slaves."[305] In fact, this can be said to have been the prophetic mission that Merton heartfully embarked on, saying,

> To live prophetically, you've got to be questioning and looking at factors behind the facts. You've got to be aware that there are contradictions. In a certain sense, our prophetic vocation consists in hurting from the contradictions in society. This is a real cross in our lives today. For we ourselves are partly responsible.[306]

Those who hear the words of the prophet and accept the Truth of *Sapientia*, will also find the strength to leave behind the stale waters of their alienation, in their newfound eagerness to come forward and taste of the quenchable waters of contemplation, the same way as the Samaritan woman did after Jesus revealed to her His living water.[307] Therefore, it is for those who taste of this water that Jesus also says, "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you;"[308] as the alienated man is also asking, seeking and knocking, however in his undying restlessness, riddled and locked in by a life of *Scientia*, he does not know why, where and for who he is doing these; he is only finding his absence as the final answer. That is why Merton, of our society says, "We have renounced the act of being and plunged ourselves into process for its own sake,"[309] as for him, 'to be' is the fullness of freedom, choice, hope and a sense of direction, qualities revealing of Christ living in us. Therefore, "we just let Christ be faithful to us. If we live with that kind of mind, we are prophetic."[310]

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[305] Thomas Merton, *The springs of contemplation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 133.
[306] ibid., 157.
[307] cf. John 4:1-42
[308] Matt 7:7 (RSV)
[309] Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a guilty bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), 222.
[310] Thomas Merton, *The springs of contemplation* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1992), 73.

Areas for Further Study

One aspect of this study that surely deserves a greater attention is what I termed as Religious *Scientia*, which is the ability to hold on to paradoxical truths without siding and hence, without negating any of the opposing views, being also, the characterial quality of a fruitful religious dimension now being lost. It was implied, however, both by the exhibitors of Religious *Scientia*, and most especially by Merton, that one needs to be rooted in an initiating and ontologically sustaining tradition for such a posture to be realistically possible. Moreover, it is generally agreed that there is none other than religion that can best open unto the richness of traditions as lived in and preserved by the Church. But as also noted, the term 'religion' does not ring anymore in the ears of modern man; even in Merton's words, a sapiential way must preferred over the ways of 'religion' in the ethos of our times. But certainly, Merton, here, is not saying that we should do away with 'religion'; he is more discouraging 'religion' as a means of justification of tradition and faith. For this reason, I see that the relationship between 'religion', as perceived in our society and engaged in its narratives, and the qualities of a Religious *Scientia* needs to be explored further.

Concluding Remark

Finally, to the ultimate end of this study, *Sapientia*, could not but remain hidden from sight, in the same way as She remained hidden in the life of Thomas Merton himself. It could not be objectified by *Scientia* in the sense of being articulated into a conclusive discovery, but was worked primarily from abstract notions to qualifications of Merton's witness of a direct encounter with God. Her movements were developed into a synthesis of hope shedding light on many things that are not God, while at the same time pointing to where God is inviting us again in this age, also revealing of a pattern of rediscovery that must be common to many in our society. But it finally remains personal as to how God encounters oneself and how one

applies to this encounter, something which keeps fascinating me as I enter deeper my tradition of faith.

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