Reality as Sacred Place: The Parallel Insights of Thomas Merton and Henry Bugbee

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The monastic Thomas Merton and the philosopher Henry Bugbee were two contemplative adventurers whose quests to live deliberately were alike in many startling ways. Both thinkers strove to transcend the constraints of conceptual thought in order to confront what Thoreau referred to as the "hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality."[1] For Merton and Bugbee, every place was potentially a sacred place if one was fully present there. Home was wherever one stood with one's eyes open.

Although Merton and Bugbee may have never known each other nor been familiar with one another's work, their intellectual paths appear parallel in many intriguing ways, especially when one observes the stream of mutual influences and common interests they shared. Both were born in 1915. Both read and admired Thoreau, loved nature and the joys of solitude and communion with the natural world. Both knew and corresponded with Daisetz Suzuki and were influenced by Kitaro Nishida. Both gleaned valuable insights regarding silence, mystery and wonder from Max Picard and Gabriel Marcel. Both drew wisdom from Meister Eckhart concerning detachment from conceptual thought. Both preferred to write and publish their thoughts in journal form as they sought to know and experience life as poets walking in truth with a deep awareness of living in the present moment.

More significantly, though, Merton and Bugbee both deeply understood the sacred relationship between place and presence in ways that led them to celebrate the transformative realization of communion in coming to view reality, itself, as sacred place. Merton and Bugbee preferred a free-flowing life of openness and reflectiveness, ever reverent and receptive to the communication of Being—a contemplative life—vigilant in resisting the false security of static thought and the lures of conformism. Both thinkers realized, especially, that the natural world was exceptional in its ability to present a ceaseless invitation to experience reality with openness, awareness and reverence.

One might explore key passages in Bugbee's *The Inward Morning* that parallel various statements of Merton's serving to illuminate four axioms of sacred place as posited by Belden Lane.[2] Lane's four axioms will help reveal and bridge a set of common themes and concerns between these two contemplative thinkers. One might posit that Bugbee's approach to contemplation can be appreciated as a philosophical complement to Merton's monastic and spiritual approach, and that, together, their views strengthen one another much in the way which the writer of Proverbs envisions: "As iron sharpens iron, so man sharpens his fellow man" (27.17).

I. An Introduction to the Life and Work of Henry Bugbee

Henry Bugbee (1915-1999) was an American philosopher writing in the tradition of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson, yet he was equally influenced by Martin Heidegger and, in particular, Gabriel Marcel. Born in New York City, Bugbee received his A.B. from Princeton in 1936 and his M.A. and Ph.D. from University of California at Berkeley in 1940 and 1947 respectively. He held teaching posts at Nevada, Stanford, Harvard and finally the University of Montana.

The French philosopher and playwright Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) rivaled Thoreau in terms of his influence on Bugbee's thought. Though Bugbee was not a formal student of Marcel's (Marcel's most famous students were Paul Ricoeur and Emmanuel Mounier), he credited Marcel for helping him find his own philosophical voice. In turn, Bugbee has helped many of his own students, such as philosophers Stanley Cavell and Albert Borgmann, to find their unique personal voices and styles.

Interest in the work of Henry Bugbee was recently revived with the 1999 re-publication of his classic text *The Inward Morning*, which Huston Smith calls "the most 'Taoist' Western book I know—Thoreau's *Walden* not excepted" (back cover endorsement). Marcel penned the original introduction to *Morning*, where he identified Bugbee's philosophy as "a philosophy of the open air."[3] Critic Nathan Scott describes *Morning* as "a most remarkable book" that "still remains largely (and strangely) unknown."[4] American philosophers Albert Borgmann and David Strong both credit Bugbee for helping them ground their own philosophical studies, as recorded in the collection of philosophers talking about their calling in *Falling in Love with Wisdom*.[5] But perhaps *The Inward Morning*

belongs to the literature of nature as much as it does to philosophy; this seminal work exemplifies the generic characteristics of the literature of nature, particularly those works that Douglas Burton-Christie identifies as being bound with a philosophical "quest for the sacred."[6]

In addition to *Morning*, a splendid set of critical essays about Bugbee's work was also recently published, edited by Edward F. Mooney (most noted for his works on Kierkegaard), with a foreword supplied by Alasdair MacIntyre.[7] According to Mooney in *The Inward Morning*, Bugbee views reality itself as wilderness through which we travel by real faith, but which also permeates us. "Not only the wilderness of hawks and trout and storms brought to our attention," Mooney explains, "but also human fellowship at sea or in a city."[8] Hence Mooney concludes: "Henry Bugbee's work can be framed as a phenomenological project that renders the full reality of things" in his pursuit to "uncover an experiential ground of felt-compassion that carries the necessity not of law but of the heart—what in reality speaks to the person as a whole."[9]

Bugbee's Approach to Philosophy

Bugbee approaches the work of philosophy from the perspective of a poet: "For me philosophy is in the end an approximation to the poem."[10] He opens *The Inward Morning* by quoting William Carlos Williams: "Form is never more than an extension of content" and a poem is "a structure built upon your own ground...your ground where you stand on your own feet."[11] Such a start would, in my opinion, certainly attract and delight Merton's own attention if he had had the chance to read Bugbee because, for Merton, both the poetic vision and the necessity for standing on your own two feet were primary ways in which he felt the spiritual life was to be lived. Mooney describes Bugbee's style as a form of "lyric philosophy," which serves to "lead us home, or remind us of the home we've left, or reveal a flash of insight that where we stand is now where we belong."[12]

The metaphor of "dawn" pervades Bugbee's journal, giving credence to interpreting his philosophy as a philosophy of inner awakening, hence the journal's title: *The Inward Morning*. Bugbee follows Thoreau in the recognition that "to be awake is to be alive" and therefore "we must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake."[13] Such a philosophy of awakening, says Bugbee, cannot

be worked out with all the pieces to the puzzle in view, but rather "more like the clarification of what we know in our bones."[14] One cannot rush the inward morning. We can only prepare for inner dawn without force, as he later explains: "When we are imperious, reality withholds its instruction from us. We learn of necessity in all gentleness, or not all."[15] In short, we must ready ourselves to see. Bugbee is certain that we *will* see. We can see reality from within—insight—which one may earn but never steer: "It must find its own articulate form. If it is to become more than sporadic and utterly ephemeral, one must pay attention to it, it must be *worked out*. And to work it out is not to cramp it into a prefixed mould."[16] He advises would-be philosophers, therefore, to work toward insight but not try to capture or entrap it, to let it flow and to trust its liveliness. The inward morning, therefore, is an experience of the dawning of insight and authentic meaning. Bugbee seeks to differentiate his approach to philosophical thinking from the tradition of professional, academic philosophy, which underlines another value of writing in journal format, given its allowances for poetic excursions off the beaten path. In this sense, Bugbee seeks a different operating basis for conducting philosophical thinking and writing philosophical discourse. He intuits a *certainty* that exists outside of any constructs that he might be able to build through rational thought and language, a certainty that "may be quite compatible with being at a loss to say what one is certain of."[17] For Bugbee, rather than a conclusion reached at the end of a complex argument, *certainty* is a basis for action which he compares favorably, to the essence of hope and faith, all as forms of knowledge and kinds of certainty, which we can work from but not possess or control.

I believe it is fair to argue that Bugbee's approach has much in common with Pierre Hadot's perspective of philosophy as spiritual exercise, particularly for the reason that Bugbee finds certainty *in living*, and not in the articulation of philosophical discourse.[18] Merton, as well, realizes the necessity to "develop a certain *kind of consciousness that is above and beyond deception* by verbal formulas."[19] We have to live first before we can put our reasoning to use, which is why Merton advises that the "solution of the problem of life is life itself. Life is not attained by reasoning and analysis, but first of all by living."[20] Thus we see that Merton and Bugbee both share a mystical origin for their philosophical journeys—at the living center of life experience where language springs from and feeds

back into a stream of meaning.[21] Both writers seek to articulate an emphasis upon the *flow* and not the *capture* of reality, an emphasis that undergirds their notions of presence and communion involved in the fluid experiencing of reality as sacred place.

This line of thinking about certainty leads Bugbee to celebrate the philosophical value of wonder, which he contrasts to the "endless business" of explanations. Bugbee writes:

> In wonder it seems as if the presence of things took root in us, and planted in us an intimation of reality not to be understood exclusively by digression, by the ways of explanation. From the time reality has begun to sink into us in wonder, we can begin to realize that our minds are committed to wander.[22]

Bugbee views wonder not merely as an object for reflection but as a source of fundamental truth that beckons us to a greater involvement in the openness of being. He adds that when philosophy is abstracted as mere ideas from the life of a person, our experience of life is dispirited. Bugbee's philosophical task, therefore, is to overcome abstraction in order "to accommodate the life of spirit with all the mind."[23]

Perhaps the best introduction to Bugbee's philosophical approach in regard to place can be found in his own description of performing philosophical work *as a meditation of place.* His account is as follows:

> During my years of graduate study before the war I studied philosophy in the classroom and at a desk, but my philosophy took shape mainly on foot. It was truly peripatetic, engendered not merely while walking, but *through* walking that was essentially a *meditation of the place.* And the balance in which I weighed the ideas I was studying was always that established in the experience of walking in the place. I weighed everything by the measure of the silent presence of things, clarified in the racing clouds, clarified by the cry of hawks, solidified in the presence of rocks, spelled syllable by syllable by waters of manifold voice, and consolidated in the act of taking steps, each step a meditation steeped in reality.[24]

Bugbee persisted in trying to understand what he was thinking and doing while *walking in the presence of things.* It finally dawned on him in the fall of 1941, as he spent time in the Canadian Rockies,

that "it was there in attending to this wilderness, with unremitting alertness and attentiveness, yes, even as I slept, that I knew myself to have been instructed for life, though I was at a loss to say what instruction I had received."[25] A short time later, Bugbee served with the U.S. Naval Reserve from 1942-1946, spending three of those years at sea experiencing life on the ocean as continuous with his experience of being instructed by the reality of the mountains, "but with men with whom I lived thoroughly enough to experience the community of men and place; though I did not know it, I lived a meditation of both in communion. The thought which I have been working out in these last three years is definitively based on that experience."[26]

Similarly, Thomas Merton's spiritual journey led him to Cuba, Florida, St. Bonaventure College and Friendship House in Harlem before he experienced an inward dawning in 1941 that propelled him to enter the monastery, and likewise began his own serious reflections on what it means to live in communion with other men in place, a process of thinking that would develop and evolve over the next 27 years as he sought to articulate the instructions he received from the reality of his placed experiences.

Bugbee realizes through communion with the presence of things that communication takes place, despite his incapacity to possess and control the meaning of the experience. Active receptiveness is the key. Bugbee wants to meditate on the phenomena he is experiencing, which he sees is a way to "reestablish ourselves in a deeper vein of experience" (143). Bugbee is intrigued by the idea of linking meditation to prayer. True meditation, for Bugbee, is not merely tilling the ground of one's thoughts, but an opening of oneself through a deepening of candor. In the depths of experience, rather than upon the surface, is where Bugbee claims the inward morning will take place and awaken us.

Thus, in Bugbee we find a philosopher wishing to wonder and experience, the reality he senses as rooted in him as well as outside himself. Bugbee's approach is very much in accordance with David Abram's description of a relational style of thinking "that associates *truth* not with static fact, but with a quality of relationship. Ecologically considered, it is not primarily our verbal statements that are 'true' or 'false,' but rather the kind of relations that we sustain with the rest of nature."[27]

Bugbee's starting point for philosophizing about reality is in the natural world, from which he thinks through experiences as one immersed in the great mystery of living. Bugbee's perspec-

tive should strike students of Merton as one very much in keeping with Merton's own sense of wonder and his relentless drive to immerse himself in "hidden wholeness" of reality as sacred place.[28]

II. Bugbee and Merton: Seeds of Insight

The early 1950s marked an especially rich period for Bugbee and Merton. Both Bugbee and Merton were maintaining journals in 1952 and 1953 that would lead to parallel publications in 1958. Bugbee's journal notes would become *The Inward Morning;* for Merton, his meditative notes would become *Thoughts In Solitude;* the books share much in common. In his "Author's Note," Merton acknowledges the inspiration of Max Picard's *World of Silence* woven throughout his reflections in *Thoughts In Solitude.*[29] Interestingly, Picard's classic work on silence includes a wonderful Introduction by Gabriel Marcel, both men who influenced Bugbee's thoughts during this period. In comparison, during the years 1952-3, while Merton struggled with censors and editors over the final version of *The Sign of Jonas,* published in February 1953, Bugbee was struggling with his writing, too, declaring on July 8, 1953, that "for five years I have been writing in an exploratory way, gradually forced to recognize that this was the case and I must accept it, along with its professional consequences."[30] Bugbee explains further, sounding here very much like the struggling writer and emerging master of students, Thomas Merton:

> My task has been to learn to write in a vein compatible with what I can honestly say in the act of trying to discover what I must say. It has been a precarious business. I have found myself thinking quite differently from the majority of men who are setting the style and the standard of philosophy worth doing...It has become apparent that the thought which I am concerned to define is not easy to produce on demand. Often I do not know what I am trying to say[31]

Similarly, Merton was at work at this time penning perhaps his most famous prayer, which begins with the confession: "My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going."[32]

For Merton, the years 1950-1952, immediately preceding his journal notes on solitude, mark a significant period in his life that bear on his later writings about solitude, vocation and the natural

world, for it is at this time that Merton begins studying Thoreau in depth as well as taking on the duties of forester for the monastery.[33]

In April 1950, Merton begins to link his vocation with trees: "This afternoon we were out planting trees in the woods. There is no work I can think of that would be more favorable for contemplation than this."[34] Merton was actively considering parallels between Thoreau and John of the Cross at the end of 1950. Merton became the monastery's timber marker in 1951, and by January 1952, Merton is ready to declare: "I live in the trees."[35] Merton is so quickly immersed in nature that he experiences the "strange awakening to find the sky inside you and beneath you and above you and all around you so that your spirit is one with the sky, and all is positive night."[36] Clearly, Merton's vocation has turned to identify "a new level of reality" as prompted by a core sense of awakening through his experiences in the woods around the monastery.[37] Deeply, Merton begins to realize more fully that

> [w]hen your tongue is silent, you can rest in the silence of the forest. When your imagination is silent, the forest speaks to you, tells you of its unreality and of the Reality of God. But when your mind is silent, then the forest suddenly becomes magnificently real and blazes transparently with the Reality of God: for now I know that the Creation which first seems to reveal Him, in concepts, then seems to hide Him, by the same concepts, finally *is revealed in Him*, in the Holy Spirit: and we who are in God find ourselves united, in Him, with all that springs from Him. This is prayer, and this is glory![38]

Merton's fullness of spirit leads him to conclude *The Sign of Jonas* with a beautiful example of this poetic awareness: "There are drops of dew that show like sapphires in the grass as soon as the great sun appears, and leaves stir behind the hushed flight of an escaping dove."[39] By 1957, Merton begins to associate all monks with trees as he formulates *Basic Principles of Monastic Spirituality*: "In the night of our technological barbarism, monks must be as trees which exist silently in the dark and by their vital presence purify the air."[40] As Merton's desire for solitude, silence and a relationship to the forest grew, as well as the realization that he could not escape the world by remaining in the woods, his philosophical

arguments evolved into a deeper contemplative understanding and fuller sense of dialogical interconnectedness with all of reality in ways that compare favorably with the dawning of similar experiential insights in the life of Henry Bugbee.

III. Bugbee, Merton and the Phenomenology of Sacred Places

Belden Lane argues that there are four basic principles, or axioms, underlying the way in which we experience and understand landscape as sacred. All four axioms relate to how we participate in the sacredness of reality and how such involved encounters influence our experiences of place, including the presence of other beings and objects. From our experiences of sacred places come the narratives upon which we reflect for guidance in centering our busy, displaced lives, what Lane calls the process of mythogenesis.

Bugbee's *Inward Morning* is laced with stories, examples and vignettes steeped in concrete experiences that the author uses not only to explicate his philosophy but to cultivate it from actual experience. These narratives are all acknowledged to be rooted in placed experiences, often in memories that resurface to make meaning upon the waters of reflection, serving to direct Bugbee's thinking about place, presence and communion. Thus Bugbee's stories of going swamping, building a dam as a child, being on the rowing team in college, hiking in the Canadian Rockies, communing with a ship's crew during WWII, helping a drowning man from a river, a road trip to Mexico, fishing for leaping trout—all testify to Bugbee's intention to let life speak and instruct him, to philosophize through living. Almost all of these stories communicate insights about the flow and fluidity of reality. With the patience of a fisherman, Bugbee finds delight waiting for insight. Philosophy, therefore, is simply a means for keeping "one's fingers touching the trembling line" for "it is just in the moment of the leap we both feel and see, when the trout is instantly born, entire, from the flowing river, that reality is knowingly defined."[41]

Merton also wrote about place and the natural world throughout his life, but he wrote as a spiritual writer, and not necessarily as a philosopher or nature writer. The fruit of his constant reflections and insights regarding the natural world can be found throughout his poetry, essays, autobiography and especially in his public and private journals. Thomas Merton was a true monk of the earth in the sense that his spiritual perspective was grounded in the here and now, a view perhaps best represented by his pithy

proclamation in the early 1950s: "I do not think that being a monk means living on the moon."[42] Like Bugbee, Merton has stories to tell about stepping into the flowing river of reality. Merton drank deeply from these waters that nourished his awareness of the sacredness of reality, of life.

1. Sacred place is not chosen, it chooses

Lane's first axiom asserts that because God chooses to reveal himself only where he wills, human beings cannot determine or engineer what becomes sacred. Our choice, therefore, is one of choosing to be open to revelation as the way in which we become active participants in the sacralization of place. This insight is clearly operating within Bugbee's philosophical perspective, particularly due to the great emphasis he places on openness and receptiveness as opposed to acts of will and domination. Openness, for Bugbee, is a choice related to wonder in that both are modes for experiencing reality and meaning in depth as reality *chooses* to be made known. Both openness and wonder stand in stark contrast to the reductionism produced by *explaining* reality. "In wonder, however" Bugbee writes, "it seems as if the presence of things took root in us, and planted in us an intimation of reality not to be understood exclusively by digression, by the ways of explanation."[43] Bugbee offers thinkers a choice at this point: We can either continue wandering in search of new and improved explanations, "or we can open ourselves to the meaning of a life in the wilderness and be patient of being overtaken in our wandering by that which can make us at home in this condition."[44] Bugbee argues that the latter choice "involves an openness on the part of the person in his entirety," which he then suggests is a "condition of philosophical truth."[45]

This openness is what Bugbee later refers to as "receptiveness," which is so important to his thinking that he boldly claims that "the readiness to receive is all."[46] Receptiveness is linked to Bugbee's fundamental notion of reality as given: "Here is an essential point: Nothing can be truly given to us except on the condition of active receptiveness on our part."[47] He explains that "givenness is decisive experience of reality," yet he cautions: "to experience reality as given is to be at farthest remove from claiming certain possession of any truth; for the certainty of understanding is contrary to such a claim."[48] Thus reality is a gift that we can only receive: "There is certainty in experience in which reality is

given; but this does not seem to be a certainty of knowledge about anything we represent to ourselves and describe."[49] Through the language of openness, receptiveness and givenness, Bugbee argues explicitly that "philosophy is not a making of a home for the mind out of reality. It is more like learning to leave things be: restoration in the wilderness, here and now. By 'leaving things be' I do not mean inaction; I mean respecting things, being still in the presence of things, letting them speak."[50] For Bugbee, therefore, we do not construct reality; we complete reality by responding.

Merton's affection for the philosophy of the Taoist sage, Chuang Tzu, puts him clearly in good company with Bugbee's basic philosophical approach. Merton claims his own "ventures in personal and spiritual interpretation" of Chuang's teachings "have been most rewarding" stating further that he "enjoyed writing this book more than any other."[51] He characterizes Chuang Tzu's philosophy as simple and direct because it goes "immediately to the heart of things" like "all the greatest philosophical thought"; he also finds Chuang Tzu appealing because he "shares the climate and peace of my own kind of solitude, and who is my own kind of person."[52] Merton could have been speaking about Bugbee in arguing that Chuang Tzu's teachings reflect "a certain taste for simplicity, for humility, self-effacement, silence, and in general a refusal to take seriously the aggressivity, the ambition, the push, and the self-importance which one must display in order to get along in society."[53]

One might also find further parallels in Merton's interpretation of Heraclitus's perspective, in which we see another philosophy of awakening. According to Merton, Heraclitus presents "our spiritual and mystical destiny" to be one in which we

> "awaken" to the fire that is within us, and our happiness depends on the harmony-in-conflict that results from this awakening. Our vocation is a call to spiritual oneness in and with the logos. But this interior fulfillment is not to be attained by a false peace resulting from artificial compulsion—a static and changeless "state" imposed by force of will upon the dynamic, conflicting forces within us.[54]

Bugbee and Merton both seem to share the same penchant for Heraclitus who by "wielding the sharp weapon of paradox without mercy, seeks to awaken the mind of his disciple to a reality that is right before his eyes but that he is incapable of seeing."[55]

Bugbee's stance, like Merton's, is a contemplative one, although not in the sense of one who, according to Merton, "adopts a systematic program of spiritual self-purification";[56] rather, Bugbee simply seeks to enter into union with the invisible Tao. In contemplation, Bugbee states, "one stands independently and at the same time together with everything other than oneself. Contemplation is governed by omni-relevant meaning. Yet one may respond upon a conclusive meaning of things without being able to say what that meaning is."[57] Bugbee defines the contemplative act as "that in which reality makes firm its grip on us," though he is referring strictly to aesthetic and philosophic forms of contemplation in which one begins to "learn of a sustaining ground in which [one is] rooted."[58] Bugbee recognizes, following Eckhart, that "the heart of true contemplation is disinterestedness"; thus, it is in wonder and openness that we contemplate reality in ways in which our thinking participates and is continuous with the flow of its given sacredness.[59]

In the following quotation, Bugbee almost seems to be describing Merton in the state of contemplation that led him to craft his 1966 essay "Rain and the Rhinoceros."[60] Here, Bugbee is discussing the state of philosophical reflectiveness that brings one to oneself, which can lead one to proclaim along with Merton that as long as the rain talks, we are going to listen:

> One may be struck clean by sunlight over a patch of lawn, by clouds running free before the wind, by the massive presence of rock. What untold hosts of voices there are which call upon one and summon him to reawakening. He remembers, and is himself once again, moving cleanly on his way. Some measure of simplicity again informs the steps he takes; he becomes content to be himself and finds fragrance in the air. He may eat his food in peace. He does not wish to obviate tomorrow's work. He is willing to consider: not to suppose a case, but take the case that is. He becomes patient. Things invite him to adequate himself to their infinity. The passage of time is now not robbery or show; it is the meaning of the present ever completing itself. It is enough to participate in this, to be at home in the unknown.[61]

Merton, in turn, sounding like Bugbee, explains why he listens to the rain instead of the rhinoceros and why *it is enough to participate* in listening to the rain: "because it reminds me again and again

that the whole world runs by rhythms I have not yet learned to recognize, rhythms that are not those of the engineer."[62] Certainly, Merton is speaking of the sacred rhythms of reality.

2. Sacred place is ordinary place, ritually made extraordinary

According to Lane, this second axiom refers to the recognition of the sacredness of place through "certain ritual acts that are performed there, setting it apart as unique."[63] For Bugbee, the ritual of reflection, or of contemplation, is the act that must be performed wherever we are in order to see the extraordinariness in the ordinary. We must go through a process of awakening because reality "is a holy place," which Bugbee only recognizes as that "when [one has] been most awake, and [one takes] it as a mark of awakening whenever it dawns upon [one] again as true."[64] For Merton, it is silence that provides the most vital ritual for awakening to the sacredness of ordinary reality.

Like Merton, Bugbee greatly values silence for it reveals to us our need to bear witness to and receive the meanings of reality as it speaks in the dawning of insight. Bugbee studied the work of Max Picard on silence as a corrective to the traditional philosopher's disposition toward speech as the primary mode through which one experiences reality. "From Picard," writes Bugbee, "I retain the idea that sounds, distinct sounds, make sense only as heard articulations of silence. Perhaps sounds are only so heard as we are still. Otherwise they are only abstractly heard, and no matter the order noted between them, they would tend to become a sequence of noises."[65] Silence enables us to hear being, which is an essential criterion for seeing the ordinary stand out as extraordinary. Bugbee records these thoughts on the ritual of being silent and reflective in place:

> How welcome everything is, apprehended with such constancy in the immediacy of the flow of meaning, how fluent the articulate world. It is as if it all flowed directly and simply from within oneself and one were receiving the world "from within" as much as "from without." As silence is to the spoken word, so being is to everything distinct. Things are definitely given as being as the issue of silence. They are, are, eternally are. To experience them as being is to know them from within; this knowing them from within is concrete experience.[66]

Bugbee seems to suggest, therefore, that if there is a proper ritual for experiencing the sacredness of reality, then silence helps us become more *responsive to the articulate world around us*; for Bugbee this means that "whatever, then, is truly given, truly perceived, is loved; to love is to understand what is perceived as eternal. Only the truly received is truly given; true reception is active contemplation; it involves completeness, that is purity of response."[67]

Bugbee's philosophical project is centered on *reflecting* during and upon experiences of thinking, a thinking-as-receptiveness that is opposed to merely reasoning about statements concerning such experiences. He defines reflection as "a trying to remember, a digging that is pointless if it be not digging down directly beneath where one stands, so that the waters of his life may re-invade the present moment and define the meaning of both."[68] In other words, Bugbee wants to swim in the river of thinking—live—instead of conducting a slide-show presentation about authentic thoughts afterwards.[69] Quite literally, Bugbee claims that rivers *instruct:* "A river carries with it the sense of reality as I would do justice to it. I could wish for no more than to do justice to the instruction I have received from moving waters."[70] This leads Bugbee to formulate one of the most beautiful and revealing passages in *The Inward Morning*:

> It seems that there is a stream of limitless meaning flowing into the life of a man if he can but patiently entrust himself to it. There is no hurry, only the need to be true to what comes to mind, and to explore the current carefully in which one presently moves. There is a constant fluency of meaning in the instant in which we live. One may learn of it from rivers in the constancy of their utterance, if one listens and is still. They speak endlessly in an univocal exhalation, articulating the silence.[71]

Bugbee seems to be grasping what Merton was writing about in the beginning of *The Waters of Siloe*: "There is intoxication in the waters of contemplation, whose mystery fascinated and delighted the first Cistercians and whose image found its way into the names of so many of those valley monasteries that stood in forests, on the banks of clean streams, among rocks alive with springs...These are the Waters of Siloe, that flow in silence."[72] To truly speak and truly live is what concerns Bugbee more than to think and reason

validly. He desires his words to reflect living thought, which for him is authentic thought, and thus he argues that "true words flow from that stillness from which antecedent true words have flowed" and "the authenticity of our deeds is the basic condition of our concrete understanding of reality."[73]

Merton expresses a similar philosophical stance in his essay, "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," by arguing that the

> passage from the exterior to the interior has nothing to do with concentration or introspection. It is a transit from objectivization to knowledge by intuition and connaturality. The majority of people never enter into this inward self, which is an abode of silence and peace and where the diversified activities of the intellect and will are collected, so to speak, into one intense and smooth and spiritualized activity which far exceeds in its fruitfulness the plodding efforts of reason working on external reality with its analyses and syllogisms.[74]

For Merton, the woods offer solitude and silence, the necessities of his life. The solitude and healing silence of his hermitage in the woods is the "one central tonic note" that he finds necessary, essential, to hear each day: "I sit in the cool back room, where words cease to resound, where all meanings are absorbed in the *consonantia* of heat, fragrant pine, quiet wind, bird song and one central tonic note that is unheard and unuttered."[75] Merton continues:

> Not the meditation of books, or of pieties, or of systematic trifles. In the silence of the afternoon all is present and all is inscrutable. One central tonic note to which every other sound ascends or descends, to which every other meaning aspires, in order to find its true fulfillment. To ask when the note will sound is to lose the afternoon: it has sounded and all things now hum with resonance of its sounding.[76]

In *Thoughts in Solitude*, published the same year as Bugbee's *Inward Morning*, Merton explains that we share silence with others; we do not possess silence for ourselves. Thus "it is necessary for us to name the things that share our own silence with us, not in order to disturb their privacy or to disturb our own solitude with

thoughts of them, but in order that the silence they dwell in and dwells in them, may be concretized and identified for what it is."[77] Silence, in other words, is made real by identifying its reality in ourselves and other beings. In Merton's terms, then, "[t]o name their being is to name their silence. And therefore it should be an act of reverence."[78] Silence enables us to speak reverently about the sacredness of reality.

Far from being a mental stunt cut off from experience, therefore, Merton and Bugbee are teaching us about reawakening to the fullness of life, which begins with silence, in which we are converted to the essential truths that flow through our living experiences of the wholeness of reality and that transform the ordinary into the extraordinary.

3. Sacred place can be tred upon without being entered

With this principle, Lane is asserting that our experiences of sacred landscapes are "intimately related to states of consciousness"; he adds that "being bodily present is never identical with the fullness of being to which humans can be open to time and space."[79] For Bugbee, it seems that the way we gain entrance to the state of consciousness that is most conducive to communing with the presence of sacred places is through our manner of experiencing reality, albeit a process that we cannot dictate nor control. Such experiencing requires that we approach reality as whole beings ready to respond, letting the places in which we move take root within our beings.

The concept of experience in Bugbee's philosophy is a very rich one, and deserves ample attention. Bugbee considers authentic experience to be "permeated with meaning by invasion."[80] He stresses, though, that we do not possess the full meaning of experiences even when we refer to them as "our" experiences. In other words, Bugbee claims "we are not masters of the import of our deeds. We are involved, to the soles of our feet, in the attitudes inflecting the meaning which we realize, or fail to realize, in our on-going experience," but we cannot "predict and control the ebb and flow of meaning."[81] Experience is not apart from us like an object we can observe; rather, "experience is our undergoing, our involvement in the world, our lending or withholding of ourselves, keyed to our responsiveness, our sensibility, our alertness or our deadness."[82] He calls this mode of discovering meaning *experiential* in deliberate distinction from the term empirical. It is in our

ability to experience meaning that we become aware that "the presence of things in their definiteness is bound up with understanding reality in its absoluteness," explaining further that "the presence of things does not come home to us except as presence is completed from within ourselves."[83] Thus Bugbee's philosophical goal is to think experientially as one who is immersed in reality, as a full participant but not sole creator. Bugbee uses the term "immersion" to denote "a mode of living in the present with complete absorption; one has the sense of being comprehended and sustained in a universal situation."[84] Immersion is an unforced involvement in reality to its core.

Bugbee employs the metaphor of a "closed circuit" of reality in relation to his notions of presence and immersion in the flow of meaning: "In our experience of things as presences, reality conveys itself and permeates us as a closed electrical circuit in which we are involved with things; the circuit is charged with finality. But in so far as we take things, and think of them, as placed over against us, i.e. objectively, we break the circuit"; thus "to think experientially is to partake in thought of the closed circuit of reality, in which we live and move and have our being."[85]

Merton understood the necessity of not breaking the circuit through which we live in contact with the energy that flows through all of reality. We can see Merton's application of this perspective as manifest in his writings on the relationship between the cloister and the world, and between the interior journey and the social struggle for freedom. Merton fully realized this closed circuit when he declared "I am the world just as you are! Where am I going to look for the world first of all if not in myself?"[86] Merton uses the term "interpenetration" to explain the complexity of our involvement in reality. "We and the world interpenetrate," he writes:

> But this reality, though "external" and "objective," is not something entirely independent of us that dominates us inexorably from without through the medium of certain fixed laws which science alone can discover and use. It is an extension and a projection of ourselves and of our lives, and if we attend to it respectfully, while attending also to our own freedom and our own integrity, we can learn to obey its ways and coordinate our lives with its mysterious movements.[87]

Merton links this ever deepening experience of reality to his vocation in his significant essay "Day of a Stranger." He interprets his peculiar vocation as one in which he senses "an obligation to preserve the stillness, the silence, the poverty, the virginal point of pure nothingness which is at the center of all other loves. I cultivate this plant silently in the middle of the night and water it with psalms and prophecies in silence."[88] In following this call, Merton is forever led to examine his life and reflect on the stakes of a life that is truly worth living.

Bugbee understands such stakes: "for each man there is an absolute stake in life, something absolutely essential in his life; the understanding of what is essential is bound up with understanding man as capable of vocation."[89] Vocation is connected to ethics, for Bugbee, to the extent that a vocation is a calling that "leads directly into the consideration of responsibility. We learn of our position what it is crucial to learn, by responding to a call, in truly vocational action."[90] Merton's response to the woods, in "The Day of a Stranger" therefore, is in part a key element in his vocation as a monk living in the woods *out of necessity*. "Only reality in its necessity," Bugbee affirms, "can give finality to what we say or do."[91] Bugbee's *Inward Morning* is similar to Merton's writings in reflecting this concern to understand reality in terms of necessity, finality and one's vocation. Merton declares, "[i]t is necessary for me to see the first point of light which begins to be dawn. It is necessary to be present alone at the resurrection of Day, in the solemn silence at which the sun appears, for at this moment all the affairs of cities, of governments, of war departments, are seen to be the bickerings of mice."[92]

Merton's admonition that we *attend to* reality respectfully runs parallel to Bugbee's emphasis concerning our need to be *open* through our experiences of reality. Therefore, we see that gaining entrance to the sacredness of placed reality can never be construed to be the result of a method or technique; rather, we wait in attendance and openness in order to respond to, not command, the sacredness of reality.

4. Sacred place is both centripetal and centrifugal, local and universal

Lane's fourth axiom suggests a double impulse inherent in sacred places by which a person is paradoxically drawn to the center of the place while being pushed away. A tension, in other words, is manifest in sacred places that seem to beckon our participation as

dwellers while barring us from establishing residency. Perhaps this axiom speaks to the question of who has final control of reality: God or Man? Lane explains it in this way: "We long to be placed in the land of the holy, but on gaining possession of the sanctuary we come quickly to presume upon its guaranteed mystery—only then to be driven from it in search of yet another place, another center of meaning."[93] Bugbee's and Merton's approaches to the center of meaning may help us further comprehend this paradoxical fourth axiom of sacred place.

In his Preface to *The Inward Morning*, Bugbee states that the concept of finality is the unifying theme of the work. "By finality," he explains, "I intend the meaning of reality as realized in true decision. The vein in which it comes to us is the vein of wonder, of faith, of certainty. It is the ground of ultimate human concern with which the will is informed. It comes clearest in every unique deed of purest generosity in which a man gives of himself without stint and with all care."[94] We can find finality, for example, in the tone of a "final word," which is "the tone of reality as definitely given" when someone speaks truly; this is so, says Bugbee, because "finality must harbor all that requires expression as genuine in human life."[95] To be more precise, a final word is that word which a person "can give now, steeped in all that is unknown and cannot be known in our lives. It cannot be made captive in terms themselves, or in any of the cumulative resources at our disposal. It comes to meet us in our acceptance of the frontier of our daily lives."[96] Finality is what is most authentic. Finality is the way reality exists when we see it as uncluttered by our conceptualizations and verbalizations.

Bugbee relates finality to *understanding*. We may understand finality, but we never attain final understanding; hence, finality refers to the state of reality and not to the state of our knowledge of reality—this is what we must understand. Yet, as Bugbee argues, "now you begin to understand and now you don't understand—that is what seems ephemeral about our condition. But as understanding comes upon us and deepens from time to time, strengthening however fleetingly our appreciation of finality, one becomes aware of its relevance to our everyday situation all along," adding that understanding is not something one possesses and that "the spirit to possess it is contrary to the spirit of understanding."[97] Finality is beyond human control, but not of human understanding, because "finality establishes the conditions of its own disclosure; we cannot hold them fast and place them at our dis-

posal."[98] Here, Bugbee is working from Gabriel Marcel's distinction between understanding a problem and understanding a mystery, which is so key to both their philosophies. Bugbee's style of thought strives to appreciate the finality with which "reality makes its stand here and now in existing things"; thus, the finality of reality is *given* reality, reality received but not possessed.[99] This leads Bugbee to the vital recognition of *the sacred*:

> Finality grounds our standing forth; in standing forth we receive the gift of all existent things: coexistence in communion. The sacramental act, and the sacredness of all things—it is to these that reflection on finality must ultimately come. To perceive something truly is to be alive to it in its sacredness; such, at least, is the full implication of the idea of true perception to which I have been led. And the individuality and universality of whatever is so perceived are clarified in the finding of it sacred. The mystery of each thing is the mystery of all things; and this—not generalization or the broadening of our scope of attention to wider and wider complexes of things, is the foundation of the idea of universe: the omnirelevance of the experience of something as sacred.[100]

From the force of his thinking about finality, Bugbee is led to end his published journal with the adoption of a "religious attitude," which he describes as one that "challenges the ultimacy of any interpretation of reality which is 'objective' in the sense of abstracting from the depth of our experience as responsible beings."[101] What Bugbee fundamentally resists is any attitude that demands a conception of God as the basis for religious belief: "I cannot but think that the very notion of object incorporates a mode of thinking with respect to reality which is cut loose from religious attitude."[102] He defines authentic religious attitude as "one of truly universal concern for things, of concern informed with the universality of finite things," which does not mean things in general, but rather a concrete "experience of things in the vein of individuality, for this is precisely the vein in which they are experienced as universal."[103] Therefore, despite his perhaps surprising disclaimers regarding having any association with a religious tradition, Bugbee adopts a spiritual attitude that "always seems to involve humility" that leads him to conclusions regarding faith and rever-

ence, with reverence understood as a mixture of understanding and communion—an "understanding of reality consummated in reverence as understanding-communion."[104]

Bugbee's religious attitude is comparable to what Merton defines as a "sacred attitude" in *The Inner Experience*, an attitude "of reverence, awe, and silence before the mystery that begins to take place within us when we become aware of our inmost self."[105] In contrast, "[t]he secular attitude is one of gross disrespect for reality, upon which the worldly mind seeks only to force its own crude patterns. The secular man is the slave of his own prejudices, preconceptions, and limitations."[106] Merton argues that "that it is therefore a matter of great courage and spiritual energy to turn away from diversion and prepare to meet, face-to-face, that *immediate* experience of life which is intolerable to the exterior man."[107] Merton's emphasis on "immediate" highlights this sense in which reality can be approached as sacred ground.

Merton adopts Gabriel Marcel's stance regarding the philosopher's proper task as the chosen epithet to *Raids on the Unpseakable*: "Today the first and perhaps the only duty of the philosopher is to defend man against himself: to defend man against that extraordinary temptation toward inhumanity to which—almost without being aware of it—so many human beings today have yielded."[108] Merton addresses *Raids*, itself, in the Prologue to the book, expressing his hope that the insights of *Raids* "may perhaps enable a rare person here and there to come alive and be awake at a moment when wakefulness is desirable."[109] Bugbee, likewise, ends his journal in agreement with Marcel that the philosopher's task is to defend humanity from itself: "It is the constant part of a philosopher's job today to guard against the degeneration of basic ideas which have come to traditional embodiment in certain terms, through which they may then suffer inflation and debasement. The language of testimony may always be taken in vain."[110]

Bugbee sounds a great deal like Thomas Merton as he writes toward the end of his seminal work: "These have been days of study, in Tillich, in the book of essays about his work, and I have read the Fourth Gospel and the Book of Job, rounding up on this day of cold and driving rain, with the opening chapters of *Moby Dick*."[111] Bugbee proceeds to compare God's voice in the whirlwind to the dramatic emergence of the great white whale and finds himself, consequently, claiming "the presence of the thing is the

cleansing of the man."[112] By the term "cleansing" Bugbee may be suggesting a spiritual emptying, an idea he learned from "the teachings of Meister Eckhart to the effect that we have only to be empty to be filled."[113] Perhaps in a real sense, this is what it means to experience reality as a sacred place in as much as our openness to presences, by being present ourselves, leads to the cleansing—the healing—of the soul. It is a "sacramental act, and the sacredness of all things" Bugbee reminds us, "that reflection on finality must ultimately come. To perceive something truly is to be alive to it in its sacredness."[114] Ultimately then, in regard to Lane's fourth axiom, we cannot establish residency in the sacredness of reality because we are not the sole source of understanding nor do we venture there alone.

Toward the end of his journal, Bugbee suggests that we can gain a deep understanding of reality in being open to all that is ordinary surrounding us. Bugbee wants to assure us that in taking a reverential approach to life we will be better prepared to see and experience the sacredness of landscapes—the sacredness of reality—in which we become present in communion with others. "Anything understood as reality," Bugbee argues, "is understood as old and new and ageless. And this is reverence—the heart of action."[115] For Merton, the sacredness of reality also flows boundlessly, for "[w]hat is really *new* is what was there all the time. I say, not what has *repeated itself* all the time; the really 'new' is that which, at every moment, springs freshly into new existence. This newness never repeats itself. Yet is so old it goes back to the earliest beginning. It is the very beginning itself, which speaks to us."[116]

Merton on Bugbee: Inner Experiences and Inward Mornings

Thus far I have attempted to show significant parallels in the thought of Merton and Bugbee, but in order to fully appreciate their complementarity it is necessary to attend to some important distinctions. In essence, I wish to suggest a few ways in which Bugbee's philosophy could be enriched by Merton's spiritual orientation in contemplating reality. My critique is spurred by a comparison of Bugbee's idea of the inward morning with Merton's notion of the inner experience. Bugbee's inward morning is an awakening to reality through a sense of wonder that deepens into a certainty grounded in our reflective experiences in the moment.

Merton's concept of the inner experience, however, traces this deepening of experience to God, which leads to the discovery of one's inner self and transformation.

It may be helpful to first examine Bugbee's explicit references to theologians and religious language. As noted earlier, Bugbee concludes *The Inward Morning* on a spiritual note, employing a vocabulary more conducive to theologians than philosophers. In those concluding pages Bugbee discusses two theologians in particular, Paul Tillich and Richard Niebuhr. Bugbee faults Tillich for getting too abstract about "ultimate concern" at times, but admires the constant tone of genuineness that operates as a check on his systematic thought. He goes on to praise Tillich for bringing out "the latently religious character of religious issues," adding "it has become clear that the philosophers whose work is in itself of the most constructive value are those who appreciate this fact, and whose work brings out more than latently the religious character of the issues that concern them."[117] It is this predisposition of Bugbee's that I think would have made Merton's writings most appealing to him, particularly Merton's emphases on experience, reflection and a sapiential approach to reading literature, philosophy and theology.

Bugbee gleaned insights from Niebuhr, too, but disagreed with Niebuhr's alleged need to conceive of God as an object in order to avoid extreme subjectivism. As shown earlier, Bugbee resisted any conceptions of God, much in keeping perhaps with Eckhart's influence on him. Bugbee admits that "strange as it may seem, I cannot follow through the idea of creation in terms of a creator."[118] On the other hand, though, Bugbee declares, "nor can I think of man as creator in creative action."[119] Ultimately, it seems, Bugbee attempts to approach reality as gift but cannot completely conceive of a Gift Giver. In this sense, of course, Bugbee is expressing a perspective very much in common with Buddhist thought, and of course Bugbee was deeply impressed by the ideas of Suzuki and Nishida (while at Harvard, Bugbee was given the honored task of escorting D.T. Suzuki to and from his many speaking engagements). Albert Borgmann (1999) has noted Bugbee's seeming unwillingness or inability to acknowledge "only God can save us in our predicament," too, which Borgmann argues is the one simple answer "that resolves the apparent conflict of finality and universality."[120] Yet Borgmann realizes that Bugbee essentially denies only a god that he could name, describe or prove its existence.

In terms of spirituality, Bugbee appears to be more comfortable with an experiential spirituality than he would be with a systematic theology, but as Merton's writings demonstrate, it is unnecessary to divide these approaches into two competing schools of thought. Fairly or unfairly, Bugbee associates "uniformity" with a systematic understanding of reality, and "simplicity" with an experiential understanding of reality (as influenced by Suzuki). Merton, of course, struggled with a similar distinction as he considered his worst books to be born of a systematic understanding of reality instead of, for him, the more accurate experiential approach.

Bugbee's contemplative approach would be strengthened, I think, by Merton's extensive studies of contemplation. Bugbee drew much from Marcel on the subject of contemplation, but Marcel did not treat contemplation as thoroughly or as explicitly as Merton. Bugbee basically writes about two kinds of contemplation, aesthetic and philosophical, but my reading of *The Inward Morning* seems to find an author who is feeling his way toward a deeper understanding of contemplative living. It is unfortunate that Bugbee was never able to read Merton's draft of *The Inner Experience,* in which Merton distinguishes, though not always with perfectly clarity and consistency, more fundamental types of contemplation. Bugbee clearly falls, with some qualification, into the forms of active and natural contemplation. What needs to be qualified here is that Merton viewed both of these forms of contemplation as human activity motivated to commune with God. "Normally," says Merton, "a life of active contemplation prepares a man for occasional and unpredictable visits of infused or passive contemplation."[121] For Merton, it is important to name God. "It is necessary to name Him Whose silence I share and worship," he argues, "for in His silence He also speaks my own name. He alone knows my name, in which I also know His name."[122] For Bugbee, on the other hand, the motivation to contemplation does not involve a search for God; rather it is a mode of being receptive to reality as it presents itself. However, Bugbee does not deny the existence of God the Creator as that would involve closing oneself off to possibilities beyond the inconceivable, thus relying on one's own conceptions of reality as total, which would be bad faith. In his next to last journal entry, Bugbee concludes—with definite reluctance—by employing the term "spiritual" to characterize his philosophical approach, seeming more opposed to soft-headed

sentimental religiosity often attached to the term than to any genuine, reflective appreciation of spirituality. He admits that there is much intellectual falsity in refusing to acknowledge perennial, religious truths.

Merton perceives limits to the classical Greek philosophical form of contemplation in which "the essentially religious aspect of contemplation tends to get lost."[123] Bugbee's contemplation is primarily philosophical, to be sure, but it does involve a degree of self-transformation and so is not merely speculative. As noted above, Bugbee eschews mere speculative reasoning as not going far enough, and he does, in fact, see the necessity to adopt a basic religious attitude in contemplating reality, leading him to embrace sacred awe, reverence and mystery as fundamental to an authentic experience of reality. Yet, Bugbee still seems blocked, somewhat, in the end.

Where I believe Merton would be most helpful to Bugbee would be in the translation of the inward morning as an inner experience involving the inner person, Bugbee's own true self. Despite Bugbee's use of personal stories and journal entries, and despite his emphasis on awakening, *The Inward Morning* falls somewhat short of lending full testimony to any personal transformation. One senses that Bugbee's thought life has changed in the course of his writings, but one is left with the question of how Bugbee's whole life has changed. However, perhaps the transformation is a subtle one, not dramatic, and more implicit than explicitly stated. In perhaps the most poignant passage in Bugbee's journal there is his recollection of glimpsing a man drowning but who managed to pull himself out of the water by latching on to a rooted willow. Bugbee rushes to help just as the man is clawing his way up the bank:

> Slowly he raised his head and we looked into each other's eyes. I lifted out both hands and helped him to his feet. Not a word passed between us. As nearly as I can relive the matter, the compassion I felt with this man gave way into awe and respect for what I witnessed in him. He seemed absolutely clean. In that steady gaze of his I met reality point blank, filtered and distilled as the purity of a man. I think of Meister Eckhart's "becoming as we were before we were born."[124]

In reading this, I am reminded of Merton's words from *The Inner Experience*: "the awakening of the inner self is purely the work of love, and there can be no love where there is not 'another' to love."[125] Perhaps Bugbee did, indeed, connect the inward morning to the transformation of the true, inner self.

There is no story of conversionary experiences at the end, but Bugbee's conclusion to *The Inward Morning* does appear to reflect an inward change at least in the form of a greater openness: "I am not content with what I have worked out; but I have worked out enough, perhaps, to be content to consider more carefully as I move along, and to welcome all manner of thinking other than my own."[126] Bugbee's statement implies a quest for transformation to a degree, though perhaps not as the crucial issue that it is in Merton's writings.

Certainly such openness was part of Merton's own success in actively pursuing diverse approaches to understanding reality. In *The Inner Experience*, for a perfect example, Merton exhibits his appreciation and respect for the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the wisdom of the Sioux Indians, the teachings of Zen Buddhist masters and Hindu yogis, as well as the wide variety of voices from his own Christian and monastic traditions. "Whatever may be the philosophies and theologies behind these forms of contemplative existence, the striving is always the same: the quest for unity, a return to the inmost self united with the Absolute, a quest for Him Who is above all, and in all, and Who Alone is Alone."[127] Merton found a degree of compatibility with existentialist philosophy, for example, in terms of being able to identify with those who were authentically striving for truth beyond human constructions: "genuine existentialism is, like Zen Buddhism and like apophatic Christian mysticism, hidden in life itself. It cannot be distilled out in verbal formulas."[128]

Merton embraces a mystical perspective in *The Inner Experience*, whereas Bugbee dismisses a mystical definition for his own contemplative outlook. Bugbee acknowledges the power of the ineffable in proposing that "creation is inexpugnably mysterious," but he does not see such a proclamation as necessarily an endorsement of mysticism. Bugbee tends to regard mysticism as being "at times perilously close to abdication of responsibility and a kind of paralytic seizure of the will."[129] "Not out of this world, but in this world, we are," Bugbee declares, sounding very much like Merton.[130] Merton understands this, of course, and shares Bugbee's

disdain for any kind of mysticism tending toward escapism or withdrawal from reality, too, adamantly opposing "false mysticism and pseudo-religiosity" as manifestations of "fake interiorization."[131]

Conclusion

Merton and Bugbee share an underlying fundamental concern in the vitalness of listening and response. Bugbee listened to mountains and rivers and heard a call to which he must respond, a call to responsibility. Merton expressed the essence of Bugbee's philosophy best perhaps when he declared that one's whole life can be "a listening."[132] In the end, the crucial difference between Merton and Bugbee is that Merton attributed what he heard to the silent language of God. "My salvation is to hear and respond" to Him, he writes, "[f]or this, my life must be silent. Hence, my silence is my salvation."[133]

In reading both Merton and Bugbee as they write about contemplating reality, I cannot help but reach a distinction that Merton listened a bit more deeply by attending to the inner reality of his life than Bugbee appeared to do. I make this judgment, though, without conclusive evidence. I would have liked to have listened to both these men for myself, face-to-face, in a sacred place akin to what Sigurd Olsen calls a *listening-point*: "Only when one comes to listen, only when one is aware and still, can things be seen and heard. Everyone has a listening-point somewhere. It does not have to be in the north or close to the wilderness, but some place of quiet where the universe can be contemplated with awe."[134]

Notes

1. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, (London: J.M. Dent and Rutland VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1995), p. 78.

2. Henry Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1958, 1999); Belden Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. (1988; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

3. Gabriel Marcel, "Introduction to the 1958 Edition", *The Inward Morning*, p. 26.

4. Nathan Scott, *Visions of Presence in American Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1993), p. 2.

5. Albert Borgmann, "Finding Philosophy," *Falling in Love with Wisdom* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 157-160; David Strong, "The Fragility of Freedom," *Falling in Love With Wisdom*, pp. 180-183.

6. Douglas Burton-Christie, "The Literature of Nature and the Quest for the Sacred," *The Sacred Place: Witnessing the Holy in the Physical World*, W. Scott Olsen and Scott Cairns, Eds. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press), pp. 165-177.

7. Edward F. Mooney, Ed., *Wilderness and the Heart* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1999).

8. Mooney, *The Inward Morning*, p. xi.

9. Mooney, *The Inward Morning*, pp. xvi, xvii.

10. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 33.

11. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 33.

12. Edward F. Mooney, 'When Philosophy Becomes Lyric,' *Wilderness and the Heart*, p. 205.

13. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, p. 76.

14. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 35.

15. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 117.

16. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, pp. 33-34.

17. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 36.

18. See Pierre Hadot, *What is Ancient Philosophy?* Michael Chase, Trans., (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard, 2002); and *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Arnold I. Davidson, Ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995).

19. Thomas Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p. 38, author's emphasis.

20. Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Noonday, 1958), p. 78.

21. In a similar vein, ecophilosopher David Abram (1996) is interested in this streaming "silent conversation" with reality, especially with the natural world: "Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head, I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on—this improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathing landscape that it inhabits"; *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Pantheon,1997), pp 52-53.

22. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 38.

23. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 10.

24. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 139 (author's emphasis).

25. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 140.

26. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 140.

27. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, p. 262 (author's emphasis).

28. Thomas Merton, "Hagia Sophia," *Emblems of a Season of Fury* (New York: New Directions, 1963), p. 61. Incidentally, another striking parallel to Bugbee is Merton's title for part one of the poem, in which the reference to hidden wholeness is made; Merton labels the beginning of this poem as: "Dawn. The Hour of Lauds."

29. Max Picard, *The World of Silence* (New York: Gateway, 1948).

30. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning* (1958) p. 79.

31. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 79.

32. Merton, *Thoughts In Solitude*, p. 83.

33. For a helpful comparative study of Merton and Thoreau, see Ted Henken's "Henry David Thoreau and Thomas Merton: The Transformation of Individual Experience in Universal Myth" in *The Merton Seasonal*, 22.2 (Summer 1997) pp. 13-22. See also "Thomas Merton as Forester—The Results" by Paschal Phillips, OCSO, in *The Merton Seasonal*, 26.2 (Summer 2001), pp. 25-26.

34. Thomas Merton, *The Sign of Jonas* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953) p. 298.

35. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 337.

36. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 340.

37. *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1961, p. 6.

38. *The Sign of Jonas*, p. 343.

39. Merton, *Sign of Jonas*, p. 362.

40. Merton, *The Monastic Journey* (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, and McMeel, 1977), p. 38.

41. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 86.

42. Merton, *Sign of Jonas*, p. 311.

43. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 39.

44. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 40.

45. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 40.

46. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 196; he borrows the line "the readiness for all" from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Act V, Scene II.

47. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 133.

48. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 176.

49. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 175.

50. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 155. Bugbee supplies a footnote to this point about "inaction" (or what some authors prefer to call non-action) that is significant for interest in the parallels between him and Merton, explaining that the idea "holds me to the study of such works as the *Gita*, the *Book of Tao*, the literature of Zen, Meister Eckhart's recorded thoughts; and I have found some very interesting cognate material in Jung."

51. Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu* (New York: New Directions, 1965), pp. 9-10.

52. Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, p. 11.

53. Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, p. 11.

54. Thomas Merton, "Herakleitos: A Study," *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* (ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham, New York: Paulist Press, 1992), pp. 281-282.

55. Merton, 'Herakleitos: A Study', p. 286.

56. Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, p. 26.

57. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 113.

58. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 113.

59. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 113.

60. Thomas Merton, "Rain and the Rhinoceros," *Raids on the Unspeakable*. (New York: New Directions, 1966), pp. 9-23.

61. Bugbee, The *Inward Morning*, p. 155.

62. Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, p. 9.

63. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, p. 19.

64. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 165.

65. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 84.

66. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 102.

67. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 102.

68. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 140.

69. Bugbee's Taoist quest to swim in the river of thinking is similar to physicist David Bohm's distinction between thought and thinking. For Bohm, thinking "implies the present tense" that continues to flow despite our stopping to concentrate on our thoughts, which function as dams in the flow of thinking. Such "thought" leads to the kinds of "fictional thinking" and automatic behavior that Merton railed against as illusions. In this context, Bohm, Marcel, Bugbee and Merton are all linked by their adopting a dialogical approach to understanding reality. See Bohm's *On Dialogue*. Lee Nichol, Ed. (New York: Routledge, 1996); and *Thought as a System*, (New York: Routledge,1994).

70. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 83.

71. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 82.

72. Thomas Merton, *The Waters of Siloe* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1949), p. vii.

73. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, pp. 84, 85.

74. Thomas Merton, "Poetry and Contemplation: A Reappraisal," *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. Br. Patrick Hart (New York: New Directions, 1981), p. 348.

75. Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, (Journals, 5; 1963-1965; ed. Robert Daggy; San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1997) p. 242.

76. Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, p. 242.

77. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 69.

78. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 69.

79. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, pp. 19, 29.

80. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 41.

81. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 41.

82. Bugbee, The Inward Morning, p. 41.

83. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 76.

84. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, pp. 50-51.

85. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, pp. 168, 169.

86. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), p. 142.

87. Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, pp. 151-152.
88. Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, p. 240.
89. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 64.
90. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 116.
91. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 117.
92. Merton, *Dancing in the Water of Life*, p. 241.
93. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred*, p. 35.
94. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 10.
95. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 11.
96. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 11.
97. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 113.
98. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 113.
99. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, pp. 161-162.
100. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 209.
101. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 218.
102. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 218.
103. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 218.
104. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 230.
105. Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (ed. William Shannon; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), p. 55.
106. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, pp. 55-56.
107. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 53.
108. Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, p. v. Both Bugbee and Merton appear to be referring to Gabriel Marcel's (1952) concluding argument in *Man Against Mass Society*,(Chicago: Gateway, 1985), p. 257.
109. Merton, *Raids on the Unspeakable*, pp. 2-3.
110. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 232.
111. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 226.
112. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 226.
113. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 106.
114. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 209.
115. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 129.
116. Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation.*, p. 107.
117. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 216.
118. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 222.
119. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 222.
120. Albert Borgmann, "Bugbee on Philosophy and Modernity," *Wilderness and the Heart*, p. 126.
121. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 57.
122. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 73.
123. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 33.
124. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 172.

125. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 24.
126. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 232.
127. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 30.
128. Thomas Merton, "The Other Side of Despair," *Mystics and Zen Masters* (New York: Noonday, 1967), pp. 253-280 (258).
129. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 223.
130. Bugbee, *The Inward Morning*, p. 224.
131. Merton, *The Inner Experience*, p. 25.
132. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 74.
133. Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, p. 74.
134. Sigurd Olsen, *Listening Point*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), p. 8.