

Engaged Spirituality in Thomas Merton and Thich Nhat Hanh: An Inter-Monastic Dialogue on Contemplation in a World of Action

By **Cristóbal Serrán-Pagán y Fuentes**

Thomas Merton's interfaith dialogue with the Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh sets a resonating example on how the mystical journey towards Ultimate Reality can be implemented in the here and now. The Christian-Buddhist engaged model of spirituality Merton and Nhat Hanh employ encompasses both the life of contemplation (archetypical Mary) and the life of action (archetypical Martha). In the Christian mystical tradition Mary represents the life of prayer through the practice of meditation and deep listening while Martha exemplifies the active life through the practice of compassion and, above all, showing empathetic understanding with those who are experiencing suffering in the world. As Leonardo Boff reminds us, "all true liberation arises out of a deep encounter with God, which impels us toward committed action."¹

These two accomplished spiritual masters – Merton and Nhat Hanh – have developed an ethics of love in action based on the universal values of tolerance, responsibility, mutual respect and reverence for all sentient and non-sentient beings. Their philosophy of love even includes loving one's enemy. Their legacies have shown how instrumental and valuable their teachings are for many present and future generations of spiritual seekers, especially when they are still trying to overcome the triple social evils in America: war, racism and poverty. Merton and Nhat Hanh are considered two of the most influential spiritual figures in the interfaith dialogue movement. Both of them found the right balance between the contemplative life of Mary and the active life of Martha, as is evident first, in their encounters with war (especially the Vietnam War); second, through the key aspects of their inter-monastic dialogue on the contemplative life and the active life; and third, by their mystical teachings of love in action.

Merton's and Nhat Hanh's Encounters with War

Thomas Merton was born in Prades, France, on January 31, 1915, "in a year of a great war,"² as he wrote in his autobiography. The First World War was fought to end all wars. Merton's earlier pacifist ideas would take place within this particular historical context of having experienced the total devastation that the two major World Wars brought to the European continent.

A major turning point in Merton's life was December 10, 1941, the day that Merton entered the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani. A few days earlier, Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States declared war against Japan and, shortly after, Germany. This marked the entry of the United States into the Second World War. Merton's entrance into the Trappist Order provided him with a safe environment and with a stable way of life during a time of great upheaval and social chaos. By this time, Merton had lost both parents at an early age and soon would lose his



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only brother John Paul, who was killed in 1943 when his Canadian military plane was shot down.

Thich Nhat Hanh was born in Tha Tien, Vietnam, on October 11, 1926. Nhat Hanh was eleven years younger than Merton. At the age of sixteen (a year after Merton's entrance into the Abbey of Gethsemani) Nhat Hanh joined the monastery at Tù Hiếu Temple. Thich Nhat Hanh received training in Zen according to the tradition of Mahayana Buddhism and was ordained as a monk in 1949. Like Merton, global wars also affected Nhat Hanh personally: first with the surrender of Japan in 1945 and later with the French and the American occupation of Vietnam. The French-Indochina War in the 1940s lasted many years, ending with the French defeat in 1954. However, American forces soon replaced the French troops and the Vietnam War became a major focal point during the Cold War era. In response to the modern history of wars and occupations in his own native land Nhat Hanh said, "After looking deeply, I came to realize that the Vietnamese were not the only victims of the war; the French soldiers were victims as well. With this insight, I no longer had any anger toward the young soldier. Compassion for him was born in me, and I only wished him well."³

Nhat Hanh was successful in coping with the harsh realities of his native land since he did not feel any sense of hatred or resentment towards his enemies. He learned from his Buddhist monastic experience of compassion (*karuna*) that one must not hold ill feelings towards anyone. Nhat Hanh no longer had the luxury to live a purely contemplative life in the midst of the chaos of war. Many of his religious brothers and sisters had been killed by French soldiers. Others joined the resistance movement against the colonial European power. According to Nhat Hanh's official website at Plum Village:

The Vietnam War confronted the monasteries with the question of whether to adhere to the contemplative life and remain meditating in the monasteries, or to help the villagers suffering under bombings and other devastation of the war. Nhat Hanh was one of those who chose to do both, helping to found the "engaged Buddhism" movement. His life has since been dedicated to the work of inner transformation for the benefit of individuals and society.⁴

As this indicates, Nhat Hanh's engaged Buddhist movement can be seen as an attempt to integrate the life of contemplation with the life of action. By taking seriously their responsibility as full Buddhas of compassion (or *bodhisattvas*), engaged Buddhists work to alleviate real suffering in the world. Nhat Hanh called his brothers and sisters to stand up for their fellow countrymen and women and to exercise compassion as the true embodiment of their ethical and spiritual teachings. Monks and nuns should no longer remain silent and passive while their people are suffering on the streets.

In 1965, Merton's prophetic denunciation against the Vietnam War demonstrates that the Christian hermit did not withdraw from the world (*contemptus mundi* or *fuga mundi*) in order to leave it behind. His new contemplative solitude (Mary) living as an anchorite led him to embrace the world as an act of solidarity and compassion towards all sentient and non-sentient beings (Martha). Thus, Merton did not need to go out to join the numerous public demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. The Christian monk found his way of protesting against the Vietnam War from his hermitage by writing letters against the war and by showing support to protesting members of the pacifist inter-religious group, the Fellowship of Reconciliation. It was through this network of people that Merton was introduced to his spiritual brother and friend, Nhat Hanh. The Buddhist monk was in contact with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and also with Jim Forest, personal friend and future biographer of Thomas Merton.

The American military involvement lasted from the early 1960s to 1973. Eventually the United States government had sent half a million troops to be stationed in Vietnam, spent over \$150 billion,

and suffered the loss of 58,000 lives. The Vietnamese suffered the staggering loss of millions – as many as 300,000 still missing in action.⁵

The Vietnam War brought Merton and Nhat Hanh together. They met only once, on May 26, 1966 at the Abbey of Gethsemani. Their meeting reminds human beings that love and compassion transcend national and religious boundaries. After the meeting Merton wrote the following tribute to his Buddhist brother:

He [Nhat Hanh] is more my brother than many who are nearer to me by race and nationality, because he and I see things exactly the same way. He and I deplore the war that is ravaging his country. We deplore it for exactly the same reasons: human reasons, reasons of sanity, justice and love. We deplore the needless destruction, the fantastic and callous ravaging of human life, the rape of the culture and spirit of an exhausted people. It is surely evident that this carnage serves no purpose that can be discerned and indeed contradicts the very purpose of the mighty nation that has constituted itself the “defender” of the people it is destroying.⁶

During Nhat Hanh’s visit to the United States during the Vietnam War, the Buddhist monk explained to Merton a side of the war that was unknown to most Americans because of the media’s biased coverage. Through this personal exchange of ideas between the two monks, Merton came to the full realization that Nhat Hanh was more his brother than many of his fellow American citizens. The Christian monk felt a strong spiritual bond with the Buddhist monk. They both spoke about the importance of living as true contemplatives in action by fully embracing the Mary-Martha engaged spirituality model. They both understood the need for an end to the violence in Vietnam: the bombing, burning, killing, bulldozing of villages and moving people around under what Defense Secretary Robert McNamara called “Vietnamization” of the conflict.

Merton’s strong prophetic voice was not well received in some Catholic circles (including a few American bishops and some well-known theologians) for the fear of being called unpatriotic. He was told by his ecclesiastical authorities not to publish more essays on war and peace; consequently, they rejected the “Martha” model of spirituality. Nevertheless, the Trappist monk was allowed to continue publishing articles and books on the contemplative life by adopting the “Mary” model of spirituality alone.

In the midst of these turbulent times, Merton offered solutions to the problem of the war in Vietnam by indicating that the American government must act non-violently – must de-escalate, stop the bombing raids, stop destroying crops and work out peace negotiations with the North Vietnamese. On the other hand, Nhat Hanh had created the School of Youth for Social Service which helped to rebuild villages, open schools and medical centers, and find new homes for those whose villages had been destroyed during the Vietnam War.

Neither monk was oblivious to the real pain and sufferings of the Vietnamese people and the foreign troops. Their message of nonviolence was consistent with their pacifist standing found in the readings of the Christian Gospels and the Buddhist *sutras*. The Christian message of salvation is that it is available to everyone and that the Kingdom of God is open to all. Merton explained that it was a Christian duty to manifest the love of Christ for all men and women and make it visible for the world to see. The theological foundation for the Christian pacifist message is located at the heart of Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon of the Mount. The Beatitudes express the central teaching of how the blessed ones are the peacemakers for they will inherit the Kingdom of God. In the Buddhist

monastic tradition they follow the moral precepts of refraining from killing any life as set forth in their spiritual teachings of *ahimsa*. To them, all life is sacred.

To advocate nonviolence during the Vietnam War, Merton felt that openness, communication and dialogue would be an essential component to the peace process. One of the most important nonviolent principles that he and others like Dorothy Day often emphasized in their discussions was Jesus' teaching on loving one's enemy. As Nhat Hanh stated, "the true enemies were not people, but ideology, hatred, and ignorance."⁷ This statement reminds Christians of Jesus' teaching of hating the sin, not the sinner. Nhat Hanh's philosophy of nonviolence stemmed from his Mahayana Buddhist tradition. Like a good *bodhisattva*, Nhat Hanh felt that it was his duty and responsibility in the modern world to promote peace and to be peace. He served as Chairperson of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation to the Paris peace talks and helped the peace negotiation process between North Vietnam and the United States. Nhat Hanh brought people together after the Vietnam War by meeting world leaders, working in prisons and leading peace walks.

On December 10, 1968, Merton was attending a monastic conference near Bangkok, Thailand. After coming out from the shower, Merton received an electric shock from a faulty fan. After denouncing on numerous occasions the American participation in Vietnam, Merton the peacemaker lost his life in Nhat Hanh's beloved Asia. Ironically, Merton's body was transported from an Air Force Base to North America, in company with bodies of dead American soldiers who were killed in Vietnam.

Interestingly, the French-born Merton died in Asia, and the Vietnamese-born Nhat Hanh was forced to live in exile for more than forty years in France. In the early 1980s, Nhat Hanh founded his Plum Village community in the south of France, "where people involved in the work of social transformation could come for rest and spiritual nourishment."⁸ Although Nhat Hanh was able to return to Vietnam for visits in 2005 and 2007, the Vietnamese government remains today suspicious of his work.

Without doubt, Merton's and Nhat Hanh's life and thoughts have been shaped by the historical events of the twentieth century. As Robert H. King points out in making reference to the valuable lessons that we can all learn from studying these two great spiritual masters:

We humans have shown on occasion that in spite of our religious differences we can come together in a common effort to address major crises such as war, famine, plague, and other natural catastrophes. But to sustain such an effort in the face of the profound ethical problems that will surely confront us in the twenty-first century . . . we will need to find common ground at the level of spiritual awareness. Merton and Nhat Hanh found a way of doing that thorough the practice of engaged spirituality. We would do well to learn from their example.⁹

Key Aspects of Their Inter-monastic Dialogue between Contemplative and Active Life

Clearly, Merton's inter-monastic dialogue with Nhat Hanh was an attempt to establish a strong spiritual bond between a Christian and a Buddhist, a solid bridge between the West and the East, and ironically between a French-born monk turned American and a Vietnamese monk turned French. As his own spiritual development unfolded, Merton saw in Nhat Hanh a spiritual brother on the path towards building a more harmonious world to live in. For both monks the interfaith dialogue initiative was not merely a question of survival in the context of nuclear and military warfare. Rather, more importantly, it was a spiritual quest in search for common ground. Both men recognized

the need to reaffirm the valuable insight that all human beings are related and interconnected as brothers and sisters. As Nhat Hanh has stated: “When we truly realize the interdependent nature of the dust, the flower, and the human being, we see that unity cannot exist without diversity. Unity and diversity interpenetrate each other freely. Unity is diversity, and diversity is unity. This is the principle of interbeing.”¹⁰

Both Merton and Nhat Hanh were interested in developing a holistic model of spirituality which addresses the notions of unity, reunion and inter-being. In fact, Merton shared an experience of unity-in-diversity when he declared:

If I can unite *in myself* the thought and the devotion of Eastern and Western Christendom, the Greek and the Latin Fathers, the Russians with the Spanish mystics, I can prepare in myself the reunion of divided Christians. From that secret and unspoken unity in myself can eventually come a visible and manifest unity of all Christians. . . . We must contain all divided worlds in ourselves and transcend them in Christ.¹¹

The Christian mystic is well aware of the need to attain this inner state of unity, wholeness and holiness with all life. Merton called this spiritual rebirth the New Man in Christ, or the New Adam, by which the old self leaves room to discover the true self in God. Nhat Hanh puts it this way: “if psychotherapists and monks, through mutual sharing, help each other apply our disciplines to our own lives, we will rediscover the harmony in ourselves and thereby help the whole human family.”¹² Precisely, for these two monks and the mystical tradition they represent the true goal is to help the seeker experience this rebirth in the here and now.

In the late 1960s Merton wrote a long review-essay titled “Final Integration: Toward a ‘Monastic Therapy’” where he addresses the central idea of spiritual rebirth as an integral part of the Christian paschal mystery of entering into the Kingdom of God. Merton stated:

The idea of “rebirth” and of life as a “new man in Christ, in the Spirit,” of a “risen life” in the Mystery of Christ or in the Kingdom of God, is fundamental to Christian theology and practice – it is, after all, the whole meaning of baptism. . . . The notion of “rebirth” is not peculiar to Christianity. In Sufism, Zen Buddhism and in many other religious or spiritual traditions, emphasis is placed on the call to fulfill certain obscure yet urgent potentialities in the ground of one’s being, to “become someone” that one already (potentially) is, the person one is truly meant to be. Zen calls this awakening a recognition of “your original face before you were born.”¹³

For the Trappist monk, this rebirth on a transcultural level involves *kairos*, with salvation in history and with the proclamation of a new heaven and a new earth. The Kingdom of God is an experience of “entering into the full mystery of the eschatological Church” (*CWA* 216). For Nhat Hanh, “the Kingdom of God is not a place where there is no suffering and violence. Rather, the Kingdom of God is a place where there is compassion, understanding, and love. There is no day when I do not enjoy walking in the Kingdom of God” (Nhat Hanh, *Creating* 203).

Nhat Hanh as a Buddhist practitioner agrees with Merton in his quest for a more mature spirituality that encompasses all reality. Yet the uniqueness of the Buddhist experience in becoming one with ultimate reality defies any notions, categories or terms. He wrote: “To be in touch with the wonderful reality of the ultimate dimension, we have to go beyond the name, and only then can

we find the true hallowed nature.”¹⁴ For Nhat Hanh there is no need of a deity to explain one’s own encounter with that which really IS. The ultimate dimension is “the ground of being [referring to Paul Tillich’s phrase]. The historical dimension is the kingdom of God or the phenomenal world, the world of birth and death. In the world of birth and death [*samsara*] there is the presence of nirvana” (Nhat Hanh, *Energy* 77).

In Buddhist metaphysics, each sentient and non-sentient being is potentially a Buddha. Buddhists explain this belief through an understanding of the true nature of reality, which they called *dharmakaya* (or the vehicle of Truth). The Buddha nature is present in all things from the smallest atoms to the greater galaxies. Consequently, the goal of a true Buddhist is to awaken this full awareness in the here and now through practicing the eightfold path. In so doing, he or she will attain *nirvana*, or enlightenment. Nhat Hahn has aptly observed that

[t]he practice of mindfulness, the practice of meditation, consists of coming back to ourselves in order to restore peace and harmony. The energy with which we can do this is the energy of mindfulness. Mindfulness is a kind of energy that carries with it concentration, understanding, and love. If we come back to ourselves to restore peace and harmony, then helping another person will be a much easier thing.¹⁵

Both Merton and Nhat Hanh knew from experience that this living encounter with ultimate reality is beyond dogmas. As Nhat Hanh has pointed out, “Understanding and love are values that transcend all dogma.”¹⁶ Similarly, the late Merton was no longer worried about doing dogmatic, speculative or scholastic theology as much as trying to find a more experiential way of theologizing. He had moved away from the problems that orthodoxy poses to the world of believers to fully embrace orthopraxis. Merton saw the urgent necessity of building bridges with Asian spiritual leaders as an attempt to recover this contemplative (forgotten mystical) dimension of Christianity. He wrote:

This [contemplative] aspect of Christianity will perhaps be intelligible to those in an Asian culture who are familiar with the deeper aspects of their own religious tradition. Hence, the crucial importance of a Christian dialogue in depth with Asian religion. For the religions of Asia also have long sought to liberate man from imprisonment in a half-real external existence in order to initiate him into the full and complete reality of an inner peace which is secret and beyond explanation.¹⁷

The problem with Merton’s contemplative approach is that to some westerners his views seem to be too unrealistic, highly utopian and over-idealistic. The Trappist monk often tended to overlook the problems that Asian cultures and traditions had faced in ancient and modern times when dealing with social justice issues. Merton thought that if Christianity and Western civilization could recover the contemplative spirit of Asian civilizations some of their major social and perhaps psychological problems could be minimized or could be eliminated. As Alexander Lipski says:

If practiced widely, Merton contended, contemplation could overcome racial, social, religious and national strife and thus make possible world peace. But was contemplation really the panacea for all the world’s ills? Again, Merton conveniently ignored the fact that a truly contemplative civilization had never existed even in Asia. And while contemplation was undoubtedly highly valued in ancient India, it had not produced a harmonious, peaceful society.¹⁸

Merton became an advocate for spiritual renewal within the monastic traditions, following the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. He personally knew that Christian monasticism could benefit

from such exposure to Asian traditions, especially through their shared interests in the spiritual practices of emptiness (*kenosis* and *sunyata*), fullness (*pleroma* and *nirvana*), compassion (*karuna*) and wisdom (*prajna*). Thus, Merton's trip to Asia and his numerous meetings with Asian leaders (including Phra Kantipalo, Chatral Rimpoche, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, etc.) reinforced his belief in the importance of cultivating inter-monastic and interreligious dialogues. The Trappist monk learned after meeting with these Asian leaders that there were great religious differences at the doctrinal level, but more importantly there were great similarities to be found at the mystical level. One of Merton's conclusions from his Asian experience was that the highest level of communication is non-verbal. Thus, the goal of these inter-monastic dialogues was to experience communion at the deepest level, or as Buddhists will describe it, to experience the great compassion (*mahakaruna*).

Love in Action in Merton and Nhat Hanh

At the heart of the inter-monastic discussion held between Merton and Nhat Hanh was the need to bring together the contemplative life and the active life (what came to be called in the scholastic tradition the mixed life). For instance, Merton said that a life of prayer alone (Mary) without displaying charitable acts and good deeds (Martha) will result in a sterile illusion. He wrote: "There is no contradiction between action and contemplation when Christian apostolic activity is raised to the level of pure charity. On that level, action and contemplation are fused into one entity by the love of God and of our brother in Christ."¹⁹ In Nhat Hanh's case, his engaged Buddhist movement urged monks and nuns to become contemplatives in action by reaching out to their fellow human beings who were desperately in need of help. Proof of this was the creation by Nhat Hanh of the School of Youth for Social Service in Vietnam and of the Plum Village community in the south of France.

True contemplatives do not turn their backs to the suffering inflicted on millions of people in different parts of the world. True contemplatives do not withdraw completely from society in a search for solitude. Instead, their engaged spirituality is based on the ideal of building a compassionate world where peace, justice and love will reign. In the words of Wayne Teasdale: "Socially engaged spirituality is the inner life awakened to responsibility and love. It expresses itself in endless acts of compassion that seek to heal others, contributing to the transformation of the world and the building of a nonviolent, peace-loving culture that includes everyone."²⁰

Both Merton and Nhat Hanh believed that the root of war is fear, which is ultimately rooted in ignorance. The antidote for this type of fear is the practice of humility, loving wisdom and empathetic understanding. Merton said, "only love – which means humility – can exorcise the fear which is at the root of all war."²¹ The Trappist monk held the view that it is only through compassion and a humble attitude that we can accept the other as a child of God. In doing so, we can get rid of the fear factor in oneself which is destroying the sacredness of life. For the Buddhist monk, "The root of war, as with all conflicts, is ignorance, ignorance of the inherent goodness – the Buddha nature – in every human being" (Nhat Hanh, *Creating* 182-83). In other words, ignorance leads to misunderstanding, misunderstanding leads to mistrust, and mistrust can lead to violence and war. There are no real winners in war. Only love and compassion can break the vicious cycle of violence and oppression, and also can bring true freedom and liberation to all victims of war.

The contemplative message of Merton urges the person to implement the teachings of love in action in one's life as a prerequisite for a healthy contemplative lifestyle. But this new contemplative vision does not turn a blind eye to the social injustices in the world. Merton wrote: "A theology of love cannot afford to be sentimental. . . . A theology of love cannot be allowed merely to serve

the interests of the rich and powerful, justifying their wars, their violence and their bombs, while exhorting the poor and underprivileged to practice patience, meekness, longsuffering and to solve their problems, if at all, non-violently” (*FV* 8-9).

For Nhat Hanh, true peace requires one’s daily practice, especially in times of war. As this Buddhist monk observed, “To practice peace, to make peace alive in us, is to actively cultivate understanding, love, and compassion, even in the face of misperception and conflict. Practicing peace, especially in times of war, requires courage” (Nhat Hanh, *Creating* 1). Nonviolence takes patience; changing the world takes patience. Every step in the right direction helps. As Nhat Hanh said, “We know that if we water the seeds of anger, violence, and fear in us, we will lose our peace and our stability. We will suffer and we will make those around us suffer. But if we cultivate the seeds of compassion, we nourish peace within us and around us. With this understanding, we are already on the path of creating peace” (Nhat Hanh, *Creating* 2).

Merton’s and Nhat Hanh’s lives and writings have set multiple examples of love in action that transcends any religious or cultural boundary. Both monks attained a state of transcultural maturity far beyond mere beliefs and dogmas. Merton’s broader catholicity as a universal monk was not well accepted by some of his religious brothers and, needless to say, by many of his fellow American citizens. In declaring his spiritual friendship with Nhat Hanh and his plea for his brother, Merton illuminates the reality of the Cold War era, which divided peoples and cultures into an either/or mentality. Merton wrote:

I have said Nhat Hanh is my brother, and it is true. We are both monks, and we have lived the monastic life about the same number of years. We are both poets, both existentialists. I have far more in common with Nhat Hanh than I have with many Americans, and I do not hesitate to say it. It is vitally important that such bonds be admitted. They are the bonds of a new solidarity and a new brotherhood which is beginning to be evident on all the five continents and which cuts across all political, religious and cultural lines to unite young men and women in every country in something that is more concrete than an ideal and more alive than a program. This unity of the young is the only hope of the world. In its name I appeal for Nhat Hanh. Do what you can for him. If I mean something to you, then let me put it this way: do for Nhat Hanh whatever you would do for me if I were in his position. In many ways I wish I were. (*FV* 108)

Conclusion

Children of the twentieth-first century are desperately crying out for signs of hope and longing for new leaders who can address their social, economic and spiritual needs in humane ways. The contemplative messages of Merton and Nhat Hanh can help identify the root causes of our contemporary problems by asking the right questions. This deep questioning in search for solutions will require from humans a creative response that can directly and effectively address the most urgent problems in today’s world and at the same time move humanity one step forward from a fragmented existence to a new wholeness.

While both contemplatives suffered much in achieving their goals in life, their experiences resulted in joy and the ability to overcome great suffering in the world. Through their differing contemplative paths, Merton and Nhat Hanh have become exemplary models of creative interreligious dialogue and witnesses for global peace. Both monks exemplify the necessity to establish strong

spiritual bonds of affection and a sense of community through fostering inter-monastic dialogue and international cooperation. Merton and Nhat Hanh have come to epitomize engaged spirituality, a form of spirituality that combines contemplative practice [Mary] and social action [Martha]. As Robert H. King has written: “Merton and Nhat Hanh are global heroes first and foremost because their common humanity transcends their religious identity. They are global heroes at a time when the world desperately needs men and women who can model a way of life that is authentically human and also deeply spiritual” (King 189).

Former President Jimmy Carter observed in his Nobel Lecture that “the bond of our common humanity is stronger than the divisiveness of our fears and prejudices. God gives us the capacity for choice. We can choose to alleviate suffering [and] to work together for peace.”²² The real existential question for everyone is which path are humans willing to follow, the destructive path that leads to war and ecological disaster or the constructive path towards building a more permanent peace on earth? True peacemakers have already made up their minds. As Merton stated in his essay on “Final Integration,” “The finally integrated man is a peacemaker, and that is why there is such a desperate need for our leaders to become such men of insight” (*CWA* 212).

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2. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) 3.
3. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Creating True Peace: Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community, and the World* (New York: Free Press, 2003) 3; subsequent references will be cited as “Nhat Hanh, *Creating*” parenthetically in the text.
4. “About our Teacher Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh (Thầy).” Plumvillage.org [accessed 6 June 2013].
5. See George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002) xi, xiv.
6. Thomas Merton, *Faith and Violence: Christian Teaching and Christian Practice* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968) 106; subsequent references will be cited as “*FV*” parenthetically in the text.
7. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976) viii.
8. Anne Cushman, “Plum Village Summer Opening.” Seaox.com. Seaox Air-Medical, 23 May 2001 [accessed 6 June 2009].
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10. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2008) 82.
11. Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 12.
12. Thich Nhat Hahn, *Love in Action: Writings on Nonviolent Social Change* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1993) 124.
13. Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971) 206-207; subsequent references will be cited as “*CWA*” parenthetically in the text.
14. Thich Nhat Hahn, *The Energy of Prayer: How to Deepen Your Spiritual Practice* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2006) 77; subsequent references will be cited as “Nhat Hanh, *Energy*” parenthetically in the text.
15. Thich Nhat Hahn, *True Love: A Practice for Awakening the Heart* (Boston: Shambala, 2006) 46.
16. Thich Nhat Hahn, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995) 198.
17. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979) 202.
18. Alexander Lipski, *Thomas Merton and Asia: His Quest for Utopia* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983) 11.
19. Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969) 143.
20. Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart: Discovering a Universal Spirituality in the World's Religions* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1999) 239.
21. Thomas Merton, *Passion for Peace: The Social Essays*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Crossroad, 1995) 17.
22. Jimmy Carter, “Nobel lecture (2002).” Jimmy Carter Library, 10 Dec. 2002 [accessed 1 June 2013].