

THOMAS MERTON ANOTHER LOOK AT ENNEAGRAM TYPE

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Abstract

Thomas Merton is a world-renowned writer and much beloved figure who has served as exemplar and guide to generations of American Catholics and to contemplatives of all faiths. In Enneagram circles, the conventional wisdom is that Merton is Type Four. Grounded in Don Richard Riso's and Russ Hudson's Insight Approach™ to the Enneagram of Personality, my master's thesis, Thomas Merton: Another Look at Enneagram Type, is a case study that argues Merton is Type Seven. This article is based on my thesis.

Thomas Merton is one of the great lights of the Twentieth Century. As a contemplative monk and prolific writer, he continues to be widely read and studied today. The conventional wisdom about Merton's Enneagram Type is that he is a Four (Zuercher, 1996; Russ Hudson, personal communication, April 2007; Rohr & Ebert, 2001).

To date, Enneagram Type has been discerned by a largely intuitive process, with the Type-er getting a sense of the individual to be typed based on his or her observation of the individual's style of being in the world. Since Merton is no longer with us—he died in 1968—observation of his style of being in the world appears to have been based on the style of the writing he published during his lifetime.

In my master's thesis, *Thomas Merton: Another Look at Enneagram Type*, it is my hypothesis that Merton is not a Four but a Seven. To prove my hypothesis, I relied not on my intuition but on evidence culled from thousands of pages written by and about Merton both before and after his death. In addition to Merton's posthumously published private journals and letters, I relied heavily on his official biography *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton* by Michael Mott (1984).

This article is based on my thesis. I present first a Factual Background or portrait of Thomas Merton, which summarizes my research, followed by my

Enneagram analysis, which is grounded in Don Richard Riso's and Russ Hudson's Insight Approach™ to the Enneagram of Personality.

Factual Background

Thomas Merton was born in 1915 in France to a New Zealander father and an American mother. He lost his mother at age 6 and his father at age 15. He was educated first in France, then in England. Before starting at Oxford University, he traveled on his own in Europe and fell in love with the churches in Rome. Oxford itself was a disaster for him. He spent his first year drinking and womanizing, barely passed his exams, and his scholarship was in jeopardy. He is said to have fathered a child out of wedlock, a shameful scandal in his day. (Mott, 1984)

His guardian recommended that he move to the United States, where his maternal grandparents lived, and where he resumed his education at Columbia University (Mott, 1984). He continued drinking and womanizing, but he was also a budding writer and Big Man on Campus, serving as editor of the yearbook and contributing to the literary and humor magazines (Mott, 1984). At the same time, Merton was doing a lot of spiritual reading, mostly in the Roman Catholic tradition, and also beginning to meditate (Mott, 1984). At age 23, he converted to Roman Catholicism, then, in 1941, at the age of 26, he entered Gethsemani, a monastery of the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance (C.O.S.O), also known as the Trappists (Mott, 1984). "Some of Merton's friends wondered if he would remain in the monastery as long as a year. Merton liked people, he was gregarious, he liked women, he liked talk, lots of talk, argument, and laughter" (Mott, 1984, p. 202). But Merton took vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability, the latter a vow to spend the rest of his life at Gethsemani (Merton, 1953).

In his early years at the monastery Merton was cloistered—confined to the monastery grounds. He was permitted to write for two hours a day and produced several books for his order as well as private journals. In 1946, he received permission to write *The Seven Storey Mountain* (SSM), his spiritual autobiography, which grew to 650 typed pages in less than a year—all in two hours a day (Mott, 1984, pp. 227-28). When published in 1948, SSM was a runaway hit, selling more than 600,000 copies in the year after its release. SSM made Merton famous and he began to receive fan mail.

The early years at Gethsemani were Merton's "Edenic period" (Mott, 1984, p. 208). Harford (2006) tells us that "Merton had been on a high for more than two years" after entering Gethsemani (p. 60). Beginning in 1949, however, Merton began to have crises of stability, in which he desired more privacy and greater solitude. He wrote to other orders and to other foundations of the Trappists looking for a place that he thought might bring him what he called perfect solitude. He began to dream of being a hermit and of having his own hermitage on land Gethsemani owned. He could have left Gethsemani at any time, but he

had taken a vow of obedience and wanted whatever he did to be done with the permission of his order. (Mott, 1984)

Permission to leave Gethsemani was never granted, but Merton began to win accommodation to his desires for more privacy and solitude. He was named the Forester for Gethsemani, which gave him leave to roam the monastery woods alone. He was given an abandoned tool shed to use as a kind of day hermitage. At first, he feels he has arrived at the very place he has been longing for, only to experience crisis after crisis. Eventually he is given his own single room and again he believes he has found perfect solitude. But soon enough he is seeking permission to transfer, leave, or become a hermit on monastery grounds. At the end of 1960, Merton is allowed to become a part-time hermit in a small building on monastery grounds built for that purpose. Within months, however, he is again pressing for perfect solitude somewhere else. He writes to bishops seeking a hermitage in some remote part of their dioceses. He presses his Abbot for permission to transfer to monasteries in South America. In 1965, he is at last permitted to become a full-time hermit. Once again he feels that he has arrived at perfect solitude. Within two months, however, he is seeking transfer to South America. (Mott, 1984)

Merton continued to write throughout this period. By the time of his death at age 53 in 1968, he had written more than 36 books, including books of poetry, essays, and edited private journals, plus dozens of book reviews and magazine and journal articles, a play that was produced on TV, and the screenplay for a film (Mott, 1984). In addition, he continued with his private journals, most of which were not published until 25 years after his death, and wrote over ten thousand letters to more than two thousand correspondents around the world (Mott, 1984, p. 487; Shannon & Bochen, 2008, pp. vi-viii). He is said to have been an incredibly fast typist. One witness to Merton's typing said he would not have been surprised if the typewriter had burst into flames (Forest, 1984, pp. 54-55).

Merton was also highly advanced on the spiritual path. His *(New) Seeds of Contemplation* and *Thoughts in Solitude* are classics that bear witness to his mystical experience and understanding. He may even have attained nondual consciousness in the days before his death (Merton, 1973, pp. 233-36).

But what was Merton like? According to people who actually knew him, Merton was "a very different type than the image he projected in his writings" (Bamberger, 1983, p. 116). He was "both charming and interesting" (Mott, 1984, p. 96), "a very outgoing person with an obvious ease with relationships, very approachable, with a great sense of humor" (Bamberger, 1984, p. 116) and a "sharp and penetrating intellect" (Fox, 1983, p. 144). "His whole manner was open and...constantly enthusiastic" (Bamberger, 1983, p. 44). He had "tremendous energy and dynamism" (Bamberger, 1984, p. 116). There was "an air of dispatch in all he did" (Kelty, 1983, p. 22). He was "full of humor and jokes, and always buoyant" (Burns, 1984, p. 104), even "effervescent" (Kelty, 1983, p. 26), "bursting with fervor and enthusiasm" (Fox, 1983, p. 143). He was interested in everything, "a man churning with ideas" (Laughlin, 1984, p. 6). His friend Bob

Lax said Merton “walked with joy, bounced with joy” (Mott, 1984, p. 102). James Forest described Merton’s laugh as “a monsoon of joy” (Mott, 1984, p. 381), and Merton’s face as “unfettered in its expressiveness, the eyes bright and quick and sure, suggesting some strange balance between mischief and wisdom” (Mott, 1984, p. 386).

Typing Thomas Merton

Methodology

Exemplars of type are individuals from history, literature, or popular culture who are used to teach the characteristic energies of the Enneagram types. Exemplars have been typed to date by a largely intuitive process. Only rarely is evidence presented to justify an Enneagram diagnosis. Suzanne Zuercher (1996) is the only person I know of who has attempted an in-depth analysis of an exemplar. She chose Thomas Merton and concluded he was Type Four. Zuercher (1996) is an Enneagram teacher and author who states that her diagnosis of Merton has been based on her lifetime of reading Merton and the materials she had access to (pp. 8, 13). To a large extent, Zuercher and I had access to the same materials, except that the bulk of Merton’s private journals, on which I heavily relied, were not published until after Zuercher had written her study.

In *Merton: An Enneagram Profile*, Zuercher (1996) says she focused on Merton’s spiritual path, presumably as evidenced by his spiritual writings (p. 13). I adopted a case study approach and focused on Merton’s behavior, as evidenced by his autobiography (SSM); his private journals; his letters; his official biography; and the witness of individuals who knew him. I then compared observed personality traits and behaviors to descriptions of type presented by Riso and Hudson (1996, 1999, 2000, 2003). Why not compare my observations to a variety of Enneagram authors? As Riso and Hudson (1999) tell us, there are, unfortunately, “inconsistencies and contradictions” among the various Enneagram authors (p. 389). This is because, as Riso and Hudson (1999) acknowledge, “For better or worse, there is no such thing as ‘the Enneagram,’—only different interpretations of it by different authors” (p. 389). I decided to focus on Riso’s and Hudson’s interpretation, given their impressive body of work and long years in the Enneagram field. The works of two other leading Enneagram experts and teachers, Sandra Maitri (2000) and Helen Palmer (1988), were consulted on occasion both to confirm and augment the Riso and Hudson material.

The Difference Between Type Four and Type Seven

Generally speaking, Type Four is introverted and melancholic. Riso and Hudson (1999) describe the Four as the “Sensitive, Withdrawn Type: Expressive, Dramatic, Self-Absorbed, and Temperamental” (p. 180). They say that “Fours want to express themselves and their individuality, to create and surround

themselves with beauty, to maintain certain moods and feelings, to withdraw to protect their vulnerabilities, to take care of emotional needs before attending to anything else, and to attract a ‘rescuer’ who will understand them” (Riso & Hudson, 2003, p. 118). Exemplars of the Four cited by Riso and Hudson (1999) include Sylvia Plath, Anne Rice, Bob Dylan, and Edgar Allen Poe.

Type Seven, on the other hand, tends to be ebullient, needing to constantly be on the go or engaged with stimulating mental activity. They fear being stuck without choices, without activities to keep their minds occupied. They are multi-talented generalists who enjoy learning about new things and easily pick up all kinds of skills (Riso & Hudson, 1996, pp. 269-270). They tend to be involved in a variety of projects at any one time (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 262), have a “wide-ranging curiosity” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 263), and are “exhilarated by the rush of ideas” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, pp. 262-63). They are “exceptionally fast learners” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 262), adept at languages (Riso & Hudson, 1996, p. 269), and tend to be dexterous in such manual skills as playing the piano and typing (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 262). Maitri (2000) describes Sevens as buoyant and curious, interested in everything, and youthful in spirit (p. 223). Exemplars of the Seven cited by Riso and Hudson (1999) include Jim Carrey, John F. Kennedy, and Steven Spielberg.

Although Type Four and Type Seven appear to be polar opposites, not easily mistaken, Riso and Hudson teach that Sevens who are depressed can present as (D. R. Riso, personal communication, April 2007) and may even mistake themselves for Fours (Riso & Hudson, 2000, p. 228). As considered elsewhere in this article, there is ample evidence that Merton suffered from depression throughout his life. I believe Merton may also have suffered from Bipolar Spectrum Disorder (BSD), also known as manic-depressive disorder. Those on the BSD spectrum can be psychologically normal most of the time and only occasionally suffer from depression, hypomania, or mania (Jamison, 1993). Riso and Hudson (1999) have indicated that Type Seven is the only type to suffer from BSD (p. 281).

Generally speaking, each of us is qualified to name our own Enneagram Type, provided we have sufficient self-knowledge and sufficient knowledge of the Enneagram. The Enneagram was unknown to Merton, and we cannot know which Enneagram Type Merton might have claimed. Riso and Hudson (1996), however, have correlated Carl Jung’s (1921/1971) eight psychological types with eight of the nine Enneagram Types. We do know which Jungian psychological type Merton claimed. After reading Jung’s (1921/1971) *Psychological Types* one day, Merton (1995) recorded in his journal that he thought he was an *extraverted sensation* type (p. 96). According to Riso and Hudson (1996), the *extraverted sensation* type correlates to Enneagram Type Seven (pp. 262-263, 442). The *introverted intuitive* type, they say, correlates to Enneagram Type Four (Riso & Hudson, 1996, p. 147, 442).

The Childhood Pattern

If Merton is Enneagram Type Seven, Riso and Hudson (2000) would expect to find him having had frustrated object relations with his maternal figure but not frustrated object relations with his paternal figure (pp. 67-70). That is in fact the case. Merton's official biographer, Michael Mott (1984), tells us there was no one Merton loved more than his father (p. 182).

To explain a Seven's frustration with the maternal figure, Riso and Hudson (1999) would expect to find early evidence of the Seven's being cut off from the maternal figure's nurturance. They give as examples the birth of another child and the mother's absence due to illness (pp. 264-65). In Merton's case, both are true. His brother, John Paul, was born when Merton was around three and a half years old. We are told Merton now "had tantrums enough for any number of children" and his mother's "discipline grew harsher" (Mott, 1984, p. 17). Compounding the frustration occasioned by his sibling's birth is the fact that Merton's mother suffered from stomach cancer and died when Merton was only six. Clearly, Merton fits the childhood pattern for the Seven.

Merton's Depressions

Following his mother's death, what was likely Merton's first episode of major depression sounds crushing for one so young (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 16). His grief, he says:

...was not the grief of a child, with pangs of sorrow and many tears. It had something of the heavy perplexity and gloom of adult grief, and was therefore all the more of a burden because it was to that extent, unnatural. (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 16)

The little family split up, with John Paul remaining in the States with the maternal grandparents and Merton's father, a landscape painter, taking Merton along on his painting travels. The traveling life was no doubt chaotic for the young child Merton was, but he seems to remember it with at least some fondness (Merton, 1948/1998, pp. 20-21).

At age eleven, however, Merton's father sent him to a Lycée (boarding school) in France and Merton experienced another likely period of depression. Merton (1948/1998) tells us he felt "pangs of desolation and emptiness and abandonment" for the first several months, during which he "plead[ed] with [his] Father to let [him] out of the miserable school" (pp. 54-55). His father's death when Merton was 15 was yet another occasion for major depression in Merton's young life. Although Merton only admits to being depressed for a month or two (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 94), it is more likely his depression lingered, causing the period of acting out, particularly at Cambridge University, that Merton tells us lasted for five or six years after his father's death (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 94). These are the first of many episodes of depression Merton suffered throughout his life, which may have given some the impression that he was Enneagram Type

Four. As Riso and Hudson (2000) have noted, however, Sevens can suffer from depression as much as any Type (p. 228).

At the beginning of his second year at Columbia, Merton experienced what sounds like a manic period in his life. He tells us that:

The energy of that golden October [1935] and the stimulation of the cold, bright winter days when the wind swept down as sharp as knives from the shining Palisades kept driving me through the year in what seemed to be fine condition. I had never done so many different things at the same time or with such apparent success. I had discovered in myself something of a capacity for work and for activity and for enjoyment that I had never dreamed of. And everything began to come easy...

It was not that I was really studying hard or working hard: but all of a sudden I had fallen into a kind of mysterious knack of keeping a hundred different interests going in the air at the same time. It was a kind of stupendous juggling act, a tour-de-force, and what surprised me most was that I managed to keep it up without collapsing. (Merton, 1948/1998, pp. 169-70)

By the Fall of 1936, however, Merton (1948/1998) “had begun to feel ill” (p. 178). Then, in short order, his maternal grandparents died and what was left of his family “really practically dissolved” (p. 175, 178, 220). During this time, Merton experienced a “sudden collapse of all [his] physical energy” (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 206), and suffered what sounds like an intense panic attack that he supposed was “a sort of nervous breakdown” (Merton, 1948/1998, pp. 178-180). Merton (1948/1998) tells us his life now came to be dominated by “something [he] had never really [consciously] known before: fear” (p. 180). In a journal entry dated October 22, 1952, Merton (1996A) notes that “I have been having another one of those nervous breakdowns. The same old familiar business. I am getting used to it now—since the old days in 1936 when I thought I was going to crack up..., and the more recent one since ordination” (p. 20). In 1956, when Merton seemed to have lost his “usual ebullience and gaiety” (Mott, 1984, p. 290), his friends were concerned enough about him to arrange for him to see a psychiatrist (Mott, 1984, p. 291).

Merton the Writer

Helen Palmer (1988) tells us that a lot of writers are Enneagram Type Seven (p. 300). Merton’s output of writing at Gethsemani was prodigious, to say the least, as one would expect of a healthy Seven writer. He wrote on such a broad range of topics it is difficult to believe one person capable of writing them all. Mott (1984) tells us “the range of material...was equaled only by the range of magazines themselves—from scholarly monastic reviews to mimeographed underground newspapers” (p. 490). The fact is, Merton had the reputation among editors that he could write on almost any subject (Mott, 1984, p. 354), to the point that even Merton exclaimed “Great God, what have I done to make everyone believe I excrete articles like perspiration!” (Mott, 1984, p. 354; see also Merton, 1966, p. 49). Editors likely thought so because Merton continually “took

on new interests without abandoning old ones” (Mott, 1984, p. 353), and threw himself into new topics with gusto. Although Merton would periodically make resolutions not to write so many articles or accept so many commissions, he would break them in the end (Mott, 1984, p. 354), having become too enthusiastic about the topics to let go.

Merton the Mystic

Some may be tempted to think that mystics are to be found only among those of introverted temperament, such as Enneagram Type Fours. If Merton was a mystic, some might argue he cannot be Enneagram Type Seven. Merton (1961) himself addresses this issue in *New Seeds of Contemplation*. He says, “...contemplation is not just the affair of a passive and quiet temperament” (p. 9). Rather:

Contemplative intuition has nothing to do with temperament. Though it sometimes happens that a man of quiet temperament becomes a contemplative, it may also happen that the very passivity of his character keeps him from suffering the inner struggle and the crisis through which one generally comes to a deeper spiritual awakening.

On the other hand, it can happen that an active and passionate man awakens to contemplation, and perhaps suddenly, without too much struggle. But it must be said, as a rule, that certain active types are not disposed to contemplation and never come to it except with great difficulty. (Merton, 1961, pp. 9-10)

As Merton notes (1961), “It is not [in any event] we who choose to awaken ourselves, but God Who chooses to awaken us” (p. 10).

Merton the Generalist

Besides being a talented and highly prolific writer on a wide variety of topics, Merton was exceptionally good at languages, a skill in which Sevens excel (Riso & Hudson, 1996, p. 269). In addition to having a command of Latin and Greek, Merton knew French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Portuguese, and often served as translator when French Cistercian superiors came on visitation to Gethsemani. He even taught himself some Russian, perhaps in order to communicate better with the writer, Boris Pasternak (Mott, 1984, p. 324), with whom he corresponded, and translated a Chinese text with the help of an eminent Chinese scholar (Mott, 1984, pp. 372, 382, 400, 406, 413).

Merton was a teacher even before he became Master of Scholastics and Master of Novices at Gethsemani, having taught composition at Columbia and English Literature at St. Bonaventure (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 298; Mott, 1984, p. 160). He was as well a great reader and lover of books. He liked nothing better than diving into a stack of recently-arrived books on his latest enthusiasms. The first entry in his *Asian Journal* contains this “lesson: not to travel with so many books. I bought more yesterday, unable to resist the bookstores of San Francisco” (Merton, 1973, p. 4).

Merton also knew how to have fun. There was, Laughlin (1984) tells us, a “wonderful gaiety” (p. 5) in Merton not only about his vocation, but also about his life. For example, Merton played the hand drums at Columbia (Harford, 2006, pp. 26-27) and later had two sets of bongo drums in his Gethsemani hermitage (Mott, 1984, p. 474). According to Jinny Burton, a friend from his Columbia days, Merton played the piano almost well enough to be a jazz pianist (Mott, 1984, p. 138) and his college dancing at clubs was “almost professional” (Mott, 1984, p. 138). Even after he is at Gethsemani, he sneaks the occasional visit to a jazz club to listen to the music he loves (Mott, 1984, pp. 345, 510). He drew cartoons and line drawings for publication while at Columbia (Mott, 1984, p. 163) and black and white calligraphic drawings at his Gethsemani hermitage (Mott, 1984, pp. 400, 409), the latter being exhibited and offered for sale (Mott, 1984, p. 407). Merton became adept as well at black and white photography (Mott, 1984, pp. 343, 409). All of these qualities speak of the generalist Seven, the Renaissance people of the Enneagram.

Merton’s Greener Grass

Riso and Hudson (1999) tell us that

Sevens’ characteristic temptation is the tendency to become dissatisfied with whatever they are doing or currently experiencing. The grass is always greener somewhere else, and so they begin to look forward to the future, as if another event or activity will be the solution to their problems....If Sevens...[get] distracted by the possibilities of the next moment rather than being fully in the present one—they will begin moving in a wrong direction. (p. 269)

As I interpret Merton, his ultimately unconquerable temptation to leave Gethsemani in quest of an order or monastery or hermitage more suited to his perceived needs is Sevenish in the highest degree. He continues to fall prey to his desire for what he calls perfect solitude—a solitary existence in which God would be the whole content of his life. His perfect solitude, however, is always somewhere else in geography, someplace other than he happens to be at the present moment. The restlessness overtakes him again and again. It is only at times that Merton recognizes his “strong desire” (Merton, 1953, p. 26) or “poisonous urge” (Merton, 1953, p. 76) for perfect solitude as the “movement of disordered appetite” (Merton, 1953, p. 20) that for him it was. The times he feels he has finally “arrived” at the home he has been so long searching for are the most telling. He forgets he has “arrived” before. He fails to realize that all his searching is for a place he cannot ever arrive at because he is already there. Perfect solitude can only be found within himself.

Merton’s Gluttony

Gluttony is Type Seven’s characteristic vice. Literally the desire to stuff oneself with food, gluttony needs to be thought of more broadly, particularly in Merton’s case. Although “Sevens can be guilty of overeating and overdrinking, just as they

can overdo all physical gratifications” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 272), gluttony is really “the attempt to fill up inner emptiness with things and experiences” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, p. 272). It is the “attempt [by Sevens] to escape from anxiety by distracting themselves” (Riso & Hudson, 1999, pp. 272-73) as well as an “attachment to consumption....a need to be constantly taking something in” (Maitri, 2000, p. 239). As Sandra Maitri (2000) says, the glutton’s “voracious appetite could be for ideas, stories, books, drugs, food, drink, or anything else that turns him on” (p. 238). But it is more than this. “Gaps in stimuli bring up anxiety..., the anxiety that signals [the glutton’s] inner hunger is threatening to arise in consciousness” (Maitri, 2000, p. 239).

Before he entered Gethsemani, Merton certainly had an “unquenchable thirst for experience, intellectual stimulation, pleasure, and also for meaning—the one quality of life that seemed to elude him as he indulged his other desires” (Wilkes, 1984, p. xv). At times, Merton recognized his “intellectual gluttony” and the “excitement” reading brought him (Mott, 1984, p. 475). Merton (1953) himself speaks of his “sin of over-activity” (p. 256), his “constant gravitation away from solitude” (p. 253). He wonders “why I read so much, why I write so much, why I talk so much, and why I get so excited about the things that only affect the surface of my life....[to the extent that] I am worn out with activity” (Merton, 1953, p. 252). He speaks, too, of his “voracious appetite to know, to enjoy, to achieve, to get tangible results, and taste the immediate reward of my own efforts” (Merton, 1996B, p. 45). He chastises himself for “reading too widely about everything, trying to write too much...trying to set myself up as an authority on everything” (Merton, 1996C, p. 22). “Why must I make my head so full of things?” Merton (1996B) asks (p. 87). “Even when I am not writing,” he (1996B) tells us, “I get distracted at prayer—anything will distract me. My mind is too active” (p. 45).

At times Merton recognized his gluttony for alcohol. “I have not always been temperate,” he tells us at age 48, “and if I go to town and someone pours me a drink, I don’t resist another or even a third. And I have sometimes gone beyond [the perfect third]” (Merton, 1996C, p. 324). At times he resolves to show more reserve and restraint (Mott, 1984, p. 485) only to recognize that aiming at moderation does not “work” for him (Mott, 1984, p. 514).

Before he entered Gethsemani, we find many occasions of drunkenness—following his graduation from prep school (Merton, 1948/1998, p. 114) and during his time at Columbia, where he suffered “prodigious hangovers” (Mott, 1984, p. 96). Even after his conversion, he drank and smoked so much it could take several days to recover (Mott, 1984, pp. 118-19). Presumably, while he was cloistered at Gethsemani, his opportunities for drinking or drunkenness were few and far between. After he had his hermitage, however, we hear story after story of Merton getting drunk, whether it was with visitors or in the company of friends in the area. He did not appear to be able to stop himself (Mott, 1984, p. 345; Baez, 1984, p. 42; Forest, 1984, p. 60; Harford, 2006, p. 149). Mott (1984) tells us

that after Merton got his hermitage, friends learned to bring him a case of beer and a bottle of bourbon (p. 446).

Merton's Wing Type

If Merton is an Enneagram Type Seven, his Wing Type is certainly Six. In this Wing Type, "The adventurous search for experience in the Seven combines with the desire for security through connection in the Six wing" (Riso & Hudson, 1996, p. 292). Riso and Hudson (1996) describe healthy Sevens with a Six Wing as "highly productive individuals" who can "utilize the Six's discipline, cooperative spirit, and organizational abilities to accomplish a great deal" (p. 292). They can also be "highly creative and entertaining" (p. 292), both evident in Merton, who had the timing of a professional entertainer (Mott, 1984, p. 135) and was known to "bring down the [Gethsemani] house in laughter" (Burns, 1984, p. 104).

Riso and Hudson (1996) also say that "While they are essentially assertive, [healthy Sevens with a Six Wing] also want others to like and accept them....They are a kaleidoscope of contrasting traits—ingratiating and sassy, vulnerable and resilient, spontaneous and dependable, adult and childlike" (p. 292). To his friends, Merton was all this and more, great company, a cheerful, funny raconteur and stimulating conversationalist, so articulate, so well read. Merton was "excited by new ideas," "witty and engaging," and could show a child-like "hyperenthusiasm" for new people and new areas of interest (Riso & Hudson, 1999, pp. 266-67). "To the extent Sevens with a Six wing are insecure," Riso and Hudson (1999) tell us, "there can be a revved-up, manic, nervous quality to them" (p. 266). As Flavian Burns (1984) noted, Merton showed this quality as well (p. 105).

Conclusion

Thomas Merton was many things to many people. Although he has been thought to be an Enneagram Type Four, the evidence presented in this article make such an assertion doubtful. When Merton's life is considered as a whole, we see instead the rhythms and motivations of an ebullient Enneagram Type Seven who suffered from recurrent depression.

To date, Enneagram diagnoses of those in the public eye typically have been presented without supporting evidence. This article utilizes a case study model and extensive evidence supporting the contention that Thomas Merton is an Enneagram Type Seven. I recommend that all typing of exemplars follow this kind of case study, evidentiary approach.

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