

## Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*: Assignment

1. The article “What is Contemplation?” presents a rich description of contemplation. It describes contemplation in terms of life, spontaneous awe, gratitude for life, a vivid realization, awareness, a spiritual vision, response to a call, and more. What is a description of contemplation that truly stands out for you and why?
2. Merton says that “to enter into the realm of contemplation one must in a certain sense die” (p. 2). In what sense does Merton believe that we must die to enter into the realm of contemplation?
3. Merton says that “nothing is more alien to contemplation than the *cogito ergo sum* of Descartes: ‘I think; therefore I am’” (p. 8). Why does he say this?
4. Merton says that “there is ‘no such thing’ as God because God is neither a ‘what’ nor a ‘thing’ but a pure ‘Who’” (p. 13). What does Merton mean when he speaks of God as a *Who* – and what does this say about the manner of our prayer?