Thinking of Thomas Merton *by roy van duivenbode (january 2024)*

when I was younger, I used to admire *intelligent* people.

people that could

recite information and data,

breakdown an issue,

or engineer solutions.

as I grow older, I admire *kind* people.

a different people.

those who

sit quietly in the presence of a neighbor in pain,

pick up cigarette butts floating in and out with the tide,

shed a tear when a songbird breaks its neck.

people not clogged with answers

or opinions

but swelling with wonder on the brink of awe,

flowing with gratitude.

who hold doubt, and have the capacity for prayer

at the edge of emptiness and uncertainty.

who can comfort those with nothing to offer,

provide warmth for strangers seeking salvation,

and not fantasize that

a new era of love will be ushered in

once those we fear are eliminated.

I think wonder is the root of all knowledge,

and perhaps “intelligent” people

are not doing any thinking at all,

but are merely

containers

holding onto clichés and formulas and

long held prejudices.

maybe our eyes cannot see

past the stuff in their way

because our skull is so crammed.

yet, unless we see,

we cannot wonder

and if we cannot wonder…

-I don’t know what to think.

*Inspired by a quote from Abraham Joshua Heschel*