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# A Welcome Complement to The Inward Morning

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**Wilderness in America: Philosophical Writings**, by Henry Bugbee. Edited by David W. Rodick. *New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. 224 pp. Cloth \$110. Paperback \$32.*

Henry G. Bugbee, Jr., is best known for his remarkable work *The Inward Morning: A Philosophical Exploration in Journal Form*, first published in 1958 and reissued twice since then. In the collection of writings published under the title *Wilderness in America*, David Rodick shows the larger context for the journal entries of *The Inward Morning* and goes a long way toward filling out the arc of Bugbee's life and career.

The arc that Rodick presents includes selections from Bugbee's student writings, three of his mature published essays, four unpublished essays, an in-depth interview conducted in the waning years of Bugbee's life, and finally a set of appendices, which includes insightful

commentary, reflection, and testimony from friends and colleagues who knew Bugbee well. "The end in view throughout," says Rodick, "has been to allow Bugbee the opportunity to speak in his own words and, when appropriate, through the words of others: those both familiar with the man as well as with his philosophy" (2).

The selections from Bugbee's student days come from his bachelor's thesis, "In Demonstration of the Spirit" (Princeton University, 1936), and his Ph.D. dissertation "The Sense and Conception of Being" (University of California, Berkeley, 1947). Not surprisingly, the Ph.D. dissertation is the more mature of the two documents. This is so not simply because it reflects the intellectual growth one would naturally expect of someone who has completed a rigorous doc-

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toral program, but also because it reflects the maturity borne of four years of service in the U.S. Navy during World War II in the Pacific theatre, some of it as the commanding officer of a minesweeper. Still, it is important to note that Bugbee would undoubtedly have been uncomfortable seeing either of these documents published. For him, publishing the undergraduate thesis was never a consideration. He briefly entertained the thought of publishing his Ph.D. dissertation (his principal advisor recommended that he do so), but finally rejected the idea because he concluded that in his attempt to develop an "experiential" metaphysics he had failed to offer an adequate philosophical anthropology. *The Sense and Conception of Being*, Bugbee observed, "left man out of the account, and, in so doing, [fell] short of a philosophy of action" (5). Bugbee's misgivings to the contrary notwithstanding, Rodick rightly includes selections from the student documents, not because they merit philosophical attention in their own right (though they are quite interesting documents), but because they show a gifted young thinker exploring nascent themes that will show up later in *The Inward Morning* and in Bugbee's mature essays.

The apex of the arc Rodick presents appears in the published and unpublished essays dating from 1958 through 1974. The first of these—"A Venture in the Open"—was prepared for the 1958 International Exposition sponsored by UNESCO and held in Brussels, Belgium. It was written in the same year that *The Inward Morn-*

*ing* was published. The essay and the journal entries of *The Inward Morning* are united thematically. As Rodick puts it, "The luminosity of inward morning is the result of 'venturing in the open.'"

"A Way of Reading the Book of Job" (1963, unpublished) is also written in much the same spirit as *The Inward Morning*. In its use of journal entries, for example, the essay stylistically resembles *The Inward Morning*. Also, like certain passages in *The Inward Morning*, the essay explores what appear to be religious themes: creation, faith, divine justice. The question is what to make of this (quasi-) religious language. One is tempted to take it as suggesting some form of theological metaphysics. Rodick seems to take it this way. Reflecting on the Job essay, Rodick says, "The turning point in Job's life occurs while encountering the presence of God disclosed through the tempest. Job experiences a revelation in the form of an ecstatic vision" (113). He then quotes directly from Bugbee's essay:

Simply it is the vision of things: the things of heaven and earth, dramatized in their emergent majesty, wonder, and inviolable reserve. But seen in the mode of this, their being. And seen as if, for the first time, yet as belonging to a domain, in which dominion (not domination) reigns, forever and ever, the dominion of being itself (113).

This passage, typical of many others in Bugbee's corpus, does not commit him to any sort of theological metaphysics. Instead, Bugbee speaks only of "the vision of things," "their being," and "the dominion of

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being itself." Despite Bugbee's long-standing interest in sacred texts and themes commonly associated with one or another religious tradition, he himself was not a religious man. At least he was not religious in any conventional sense of subscribing to a creed or a liturgy. Rather he was interested in the way one's encounter with things in the natural order can lead to decisive action. The title of his 1953 essay published in the *Journal of Religion* captures the central thrust of his concern: "The Moment of Obligation in Experience."

During the 1973-74 academic year, Bugbee was on sabbatical. That year he wrote two essays: "Loneliness, Solitude, and the Twofold Way in Which Concern Seems to Be Claimed" (*Humanitas* 10, no. 3 [1974]) and "Wilderness in America" (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 42, no. 4 [1974]). The latter essay, which is Bugbee's most sustained reflection on wilderness, was delivered initially at a regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion, which convened on the campus of the University of Montana in the spring of 1974. The standing-room-only audience in the large conference hall listened to Bugbee as intently and attentively as those who listened to him on other occasions when he testified at public hearings concerning the disposition of forests and rivers in the Pacific Northwest. Albert Borgmann, Bugbee's long-time colleague in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Montana, recalled Bugbee's impact this way: "His imprint has been most

forceful here in the Philosophy Department, but it has gone beyond the Department and beyond this University. It has done so through his public addresses and most impressively, perhaps, through his testimonies at wilderness hearings. These were spectacular moments where audiences, accustomed to the idiom of economics and recreational resources, came to realize that there is a kinship between the eloquence of nature and the eloquence of art" (188).

The inevitable downward curve of the arc of Bugbee's life appears in the transcript of an interview recorded in the early 1990s. The interview, conducted by Bugbee's wife, Sally Moore, and his long-time friend and colleague Ray Lanfear, ranged widely, covering topics both personal and professional, from all periods of his life. The description of the downward curve of the arc is apt because, although Bugbee's recollection of events was still passable and his distinctive voice still strong, he was clearly struggling with cognitive issues. As Ray Lanfear later said, recalling the time during which the interview was conducted, "Henry was no longer writing and beginning to get a little mixed up" (135).

This matter of Bugbee getting "a little mixed up" shows up, for example, in his recall of a year-long course of study called the Intensive Humanities Program (IHP). Launched in 1970 at the University of Montana by Bugbee and a few of his colleagues, the IHP continued until the summer of 1977. "The Program," as it came to be known, enrolled each

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year about 75 first-year students. Under the tutelage of three professors and three graduate assistants, these students read and discussed notable works of literature. Students were expected to write essays regularly and keep a journal record of their engagement with the readings, special lectures, and classroom discussions. The Intensive Humanities Program was Bugbee's most important educational venture. Everything about it exemplified what was best and most memorable about his style of teaching and mentoring students. Unfortunately, by the time of the interview he was unable to recall many of the details. Still, in the concluding moments of the interview, and despite being unable to recall many of the particulars, he was able to articulate in clear and eloquent terms the purpose and thrust of the Program: "It was absolutely essential to grapple with that stuff [the readings] and not in a strictly academic way, but working with the students in a way that formed our own habits of study too. Our purpose was to not approach the texts in an overly scholarly manner but listen to the texts 'with a brotherly ear'" (176).

The arc of Henry Bugbee's life reached its terminus on December 18, 1999.

The appendices that Rodick has gathered in this volume make for rich reading. They include correspondence from C. I. Lewis (Harvard University) and John M. Anderson (Pennsylvania State University), a tribute from Albert Borgmann (Uni-

versity of Montana), and more—all of it engaging reading.

In another version of this book, Rodick might have included one or more of Bugbee's essays dealing with the thought of the French philosopher and man of letters Gabriel Marcel. Bugbee and Marcel were kindred spirits. Or, as Marcel put it in his introduction to *The Inward Morning*, "Henry Bugbee and I inhabit the same land." One could wish, too, to see "Loneliness, Solitude, and the Twofold Way in Which Concern Seems to Be Claimed" appear in print alongside "Wilderness in America." These 1974 essays, both products of Bugbee's 1973-74 sabbatical leave, are companion pieces and express the insights of a penetrating thinker and the eloquence of a gifted essayist at his best. And wouldn't another version of this book include selections from Bugbee's class notes, whether from the Intensive Humanities Program or from one of his advanced philosophy courses? More than simply lecture notes, these mimeographed class notes were philosophical explorations in their own right.

These would all be welcome additions to some other (future?) version of Rodick's book. Still, the collection of writings Rodick has given us, and the fine way he has woven the collection together, merit our attention and gratitude. Rodick's collection of writings by and about Henry G. Bugbee, Jr., is no substitute for *The Inward Morning*, but it is surely a welcome complement to it.