1969

The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel: Its Implications for the Person in Education

Robert W. Feely
Loyola University Chicago

THE PHILOSOPHY OF GABRIEL MARCEL: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PERSON IN EDUCATION

by

Robert W. Feely

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

June

1969

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel focuses on the individual human being who is groping about in the data of his own existence in a broken world. His metaphysics is an appeal to the person to participate in the fullness of being which more and more is negated in an increasingly collectivized and functionalized world. If this very concentrated characterization of his thought is correct, and there is no reason to assume it is not, then it is valid to infer that for Marcel man is the victim of an existential malaise made manifest in his fevered confusion as to who he is and for what purpose he wanders about in an existence in whose actualization he was not consulted.

To show that this French thinker did not present his philosophy in a systematic manner is not necessary. In the Prefact to his Metaphysical Journal, he himself affirms the non-systematic character of his philosophy.

> It is true that while keeping my Journal I had no idea that one day it would be published as it stood. I thought of it as a preparation for what would one day be a systematic exposition. But subsequent events made that seem an optical illusion. For towards 1923, or at a slightly later date, I became aware that I would be unfaithful to myself if I tried to set out in a systematic form what had occurred to me in quite a different way.[1]

Systematic philosophy, e.g., Cartesianism, starting from a fundamental certainty, proceeds to explain the totality of reality. An inescapable

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, trans. by Bernard Wall (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), p. VII.

implication is that a philosophy of this sort is a completely rounded formulation of reality. But yet another inference can be drawn. The totality of the real, of which, by definition, systematic philosophy claims itself to be the explicator, must be postulated as being closed. The postulation of a closed reality is analogous to that of the closed universe of Newtonian physics in which everything functioned with the perfection of a machine. The net result is that in philosophy one system begets another which in turn engenders still another. The history of philosophy is replete with examples of this successive generating of various and opposed systems. Reaction to Descartes brought forth the systems of Leibniz and Spinoza. They in turn contributed to the appearance of that of David Hume. Immanuel Kant, upon reading Hume, was roused from his dogmatic slumber and formulated his system as set forth in the Critique of Pure Reason. Kantianism, or more exactly, criticism of Kantianism resulted in Hegelianism which eventually became the philosophic womb which generated Dialectical Materialism.

There is solid ground for maintaining that a basic and inevitable difficulty with systematic philosophy is that everything is conclusively proved except the very certainty which founds it. One has only to call to mind Rene Descartes. In his philosophy everything is demonstrated with the certitude equal to that of mathematics, except that everything can and must be proven mathematically.

For Marcel, the trouble with systems of philosophy lies much deeper. His criticism is that they attempt the impossible in that they think of being as object.

> Being cannot be indicated, it cannot be shown; it can only be

> alluded to, a little as some third person now disappeared is alluded to among friends who knew him formerly and keep his memory green. The comparison is acceptable only if the invocation does not convert the being who has disappeared into an object about which we are discursive and ratiocinative.[1]

The upshot of such a declaration is that he refuses to travel the path of objectivity to the riddle of being and instead chooses the more winding road of concrete approaches.

> .....the concrete approaches to the ontological mystery should not be sought in the scale of logical thought, the objective reference of which gives rise to a prior question. They should rather be sought in the elucidation of certain data which are spiritual in their own right, such as fidelity, hope, and love.[2]

As he conceives metaphysics, its doors are barred to objective demonstrations. They can be validly applied in the area of the problematic where the Ego is presupposed but not involved. For Marcel, a problem is something from which the problem solver can abstract himself. Being, which constitutes the very subject matter of metaphysics, is not a problem. It is a mystery. By that he means that the person thinking about being cannot abstract himself from, cannot stand outside of, being. Through his participation in being, the person ipso facto is included in being, all of which renders his standing outside of being patently impossible. When the "I" asks, "What is Being?" a second question must also be raised, "Who am I who questions being?" Any questioning of being includes questioning of the questioner for the reason that the mystery of being is a problem that encroaches on its own data, among which is included

---

[1] Ibid., p. VIII.

[2] Gabriel Marcel, From Refusal to Invocation (Paris: Flammion, 1959), p. 192.

the "I" who asks what being is.

In taking onto himself the position that being is a mystery, an inevitable consequence was that for him being cannot be characterized, and, hence, metaphysics was not a body of demonstrated knowledge. Accordingly, Marcellian metaphysics appeals to man to become an authentic person by a freely and humbly chosen participation in the fullness of being through a reflective affirmation of the ontological value of fidelity, hope, and love, which find their expression in the I-Thou relationship of inter-subjectivity embracing one's fellow human beings and He Who Is.

Marcel is an elusive philosopher, and, as such, resists summarisation. His elusiveness derives from the non-systematic presentation of his thought and the capital place which the distinction between problem and mystery holds in his philosophy. Consequently, there is a danger of misrepresenting what he has written.

As should be obvious by now, Marcel is imbued with a horror of objects. Thomistic philosophy being an intellectualism, is not only not repelled by objects, but must of necessity welcome them for they are the very life blood of thought. For St. Thomas, as for Aristotle, all that really exists is singular and as such are unique and incommunicable subjects. Equally true, however, is that Thomism maintains that all existents are capable of yet another mode of existence, namely, intentional existence as known by the intellect. Without going into the details of the Thomistic theory of knowledge, the singular, as it really exists in all its uniqueness and incommunicability, is, in the act of its being known, stripped of its indivuating characteristics and represented by the intellect under its universal notes

In the very act of knowledge, the subject becomes object. Thus, a Thomist is taken aback by the Marcellian horror of objects. This repulsion is born of Marcel's insistence that the singularity of the person, as he exists in reality, be made metaphysically secure from the threat of depersonalization by the mediation of the universalizing nature of the intellect. He secures the singularity of the person against this threat by his metaphysics of invocation and appeal. The "I believe, hope, and love" take the place of the "I know."

As one reads, studies, and reflects on the philosophical thought of Marcel, a number of fundamental tenets stand out in bold relief. The question of their validity to serve as the foundations of a metaphysics inevitably crops up in the mind of the person pursuing his thought. Among such tenets are: his distinction between problem and mystery; his position on being and existence; his insistence that subjectivity is the only valid approach to metaphysics; his assertion that the Thomistic proofs of God's existence are ineffective. In the course of this dissertation, these are subjected to analysis and evaluation. The results of this analysis and evaluation are then applied to what is really the main thrust of this dissertation which will be an attempt to evolve, in at least a rudimentary fashion, a philosophy of education from the thought of Gabriel Marcel.

In the achievement of the purposes of this dissertation, the methodology of the sciences is inapplicable. Its inapplicability derives from the fact that the subject matter of this study transcends science. The written works of Marcel being representations of his metaphysical ideas are not amenable to the manipulative methods of science. The method to be employed in this dissertation will be a ratiocinative analysis and evaluation of his ideas taken in

their necessary contents and relationships. This method is not cut off from reality. It assumes the ontologic presence of singulars, each of which is endowed with a nature proper to it. It further assumes the ability of the mind to intentionally represent this nature and to restore it thus represented to the existent singular by the act of judgment which proclaims ita est.

In bringing this introduction to a close, it should be noted that this dissertation is regarded as a creative work. The purposes behind it take on the character of exemplary ideas. In agreement with Marcel, it is maintained that purposes furnish the guiding light in all forms of creative work and that they provide a glimpse of the form into which creativity is to cast it but which becomes manifest only when that work has been completed.

CHAPTER II

MARCEL: HIS BACKGROUND

It is a truism, but a significant one, that each of us carries his past with him as he engages the present and will encounter the future. This is but another way of indicating that we, as spatio-temporal beings, exercise our existence successively and are therefore subject to a development crucial for the enduring attitude-value system that lies at the core of our personalities. As we look back over our lives, certain experiences and our reaction to them stand out as significantly determinant and explanatory of our dynamically organized adjustment to environment which is termed our personality. It is very difficult to universalize about the individual impact of such experiences other than to say that they do occur. As lived by us individually, these experiences are unique, and having run their course, are forever gone. But our unique reactions to them endure; they become permanent accretions which are encapsulated in the ever expanding shell of our personality and are rendered contributory to our life style as unique persons.

It seems highly probable that Gabriel Marcel would agree with what has just been said. The whole tenor of what he has written about his life gives evidence of this concurrence. When he sets forth experiences that had occurred to him in the years gone by, he does not do so just to reveal them to whoever reads his biographical account; on the contrary, his main purpose in exposing these occurrences to public view is to show how they contributed to

the shaping of that unique person - Gabriel Marcel.

His brief autobiography is included in the commemorative work written by a group of French thinkers and critics and edited by Etienne Gilson, Existentialisme Chretien. Marcel entitles his contribution as Regard en Arriere. The English version of his autobiography is included in the Philosophy of Existence. Manya Harari, the translator, renders Marcel's title as An Essay in Autobiography. In reading this title, one is brought up short by the expression "Essay in." When "essay" appears in a title, either of two prepositions, namely "on" or "concerning" usually immediately follow it. For example, Montaigne's Essay on Presumption and Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding. The usual meaning of "essay" in such titles is that of a short treatise or excursus upon the particular subject involved. Harari's use of "essay" is significant in that it evinces that Marcel is in effect disclaiming that his autobiography is a treatise or excursus on his life and manifests subtly his intention of maintaining a consistency between the manner in which he handles his autobiography and a previously assumed position in regard to his life, and more particularly, his past life.

> My life presents itself to reflection as something whose essential nature is that it related to a story ("If I told you the story of my life, then you would really be astonished!") .....But to tell a tale is essentially to unfold it. "Let us start at the beginning. First this happened to me, then that. About my earliest years, I can only speak from hearsay, for I have no personal memories," and so on..... But all this changes when I get in touch with my earliest memories..... Conceived or imagined in this way, my life presents itself, quite naturally, in the shape of a series of episodes along the line of time..... To narrate can only be to summarize, and yet the summarizing of the parts of a tale is in a certain sense obviously an opposite kind of operation from the unfolding of a tale as a whole.....Probably therefore it is impossible (the impossibility being implied in the very notion of narration) for me to tell the story of my life just as I have lived it.....However

> concrete my thinking may be, we have to acknowledge that my life as it has been really lived, falls outside my thinking's present grasp. .....The past cannot be recaptured except in fragments made luminous by a lightning flash, a sudden glare, of memory for which the fragments are present rather than past;.....For though we are given certain such luminous fragments out of the past, the mind, all the same, has to work hard to rebuild the rest of the past around them; and in fact this rebuilding of the past is really a new building, a fresh construction on an old site, modelled more or less on the former edifice there, but not identical with it. What I mean is that it would be an illusion to claim that my life, as I turn it into a story, corresponds at all completely with my life as I have actually lived it.[1]

Applying these remarks of Marcel to the English title of his autobiographical work, it becomes clear that the meaning to be ascribed to "essay" is that of "attempt." Hence, the title, An Essay in Autobiography, is meant to convey that what Marcel is doing is an "attempt" in telling the story of his life in full cognizance of the inherent lack of correspondence which characterises such a tale. Furthermore, since he maintains that his life is not his being, yet another inference to be made is that Marcel is in effect saying that, because he does set forth the story of his life, this does not mean that the reader knows the being of Gabriel Marcel.

These introductory remarks, while lengthy, are necessary. Their necessity derives from the essential importance of the gaining of an adequate

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being, Vol. I: Reflection and Mystery, trans. by G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960), p. 190-192.

grasp of the perspective and the metaphysical position from which Marcel treats of his life. He furnishes us with comparatively few biographical details. In this connection, it seems rather odd that he does not furnish the names of those who had so great an influence on him, his father, mother, and aunt. The bulk of his work is concerned with setting forth the overriding effect of certain selected past experiences on his development as a philosopher for whom "the deepening of metaphysical knowledge consists essentially in the steps whereby experience, instead of evolving technics, turns inward to the realisation of itself."[1]

Gabriel Marcel, the only child of a bourgeois French family, was born during what is now considered by some as the halcyon years preceding World War I. The year of his birth was 1889. As he looks back over his life, Marcel cannot help but feel that his early experiences in the family and at school had a determining effect on the character which his vocation as a philosopher would assume.

> When I recall my childhood, so carefully watched over and in some ways so confined, with its atmosphere of moral scruples and hygienic precautions, I can see the reason why abstraction was the keynote of my early philosophical thoughts and why I was almost contemptuously hostile to Empiricism. This attitude seems to me the direct reflection of that horror of dirt and germs which had been bred in me from my earliest years upwards.[2]

In addition, Marcel felt that as a child he had to find a shelter from the wounding contacts of everyday life which, at the practical level, proved his inaptitude and awkwardness. The shelter which he created was that of Ideas,

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existence, trans. by Manya Harari (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 96.

[2]Ibid., p. 77.

not archetypal, but super-sensual. But abstraction as such never appeared to him as a desirable place of abode. The Empiricist's interpretation of experience appeared to Marcel to be such that spirit or the spiritual is banished from existence. Because of his uneasiness with abstraction as such and his rejection of experience as conceived by Empiricism, he was later impressed profoundly by the post-Kantian philosophy of Schelling. For Marcel, the concrete Ego, which is to say that Ego which is tied to the material (but not exclusively) level of reality must be understood in its reality and existence.

From his earliest years, Marcel was attracted to the theatre.

> As I have said elsewhere, I experienced very early a kind of intoxication, not only in conceiving characters distinct from myself, but in identifying myself with them sufficiently to become their mouthpiece. It is difficult to say how I came to have this bent; one reason was, doubtless, my father's innate sense of the theatre and his incomparable way of reading plays. But I have thought that the imaginary characters with whom I held silent conversation replaced for me, the brothers and sisters whom I so cruelly missed in real life.[1]

There was yet another factor which he is convinced contributed to the growth of his dramatic powers. This factor was his early childhood awareness of what he calls the insolubilia of opinion and temperament involved in family relationships and even the most simple human relationship. The inability of resolving these insolubilia by a judgemental prescription led him to the direct perception that there was a radical weakness in the faculty of judgment. This perception prefigures in a very true sense his later position that objective

---

[1] Ibid., p. 78.

knowledge as found in the judgement has no place in metaphysics as he conceives it to be. In any event, Marcel thought it necessary to assume the existence of a realm beyond language and, consequently, beyond reason in which harmony could be discovered and perhaps restored.

Unlike Sartre, Marcel did not conceive the drama as being a bottle, as it were, into which he poured the wine of his philosophic thought. As a matter of fact, his growth and flowering as a dramatist was separate from his development and maturing as a philosopher. But around 1930 it became patent to him that his dramas were but the concrete expression of his philosophy, and that they illustrated and confirmed his later philosophical stance concerning the capacity of knowledge to go beyond objectivity. Marcel is hard put to it to explain the separateness of his dramatic and philosophical development other than to suppose that a personal awareness of the connection between these two modes of expression would have perhaps destroyed what was vital and authentic in each.

The problem with which Marcel was so deeply concerned at this time was the nature of reality, or more exactly, of what is meant when the existence of reality is asserted. He saw in the drama a means of escapting from the inextricable maze into which abstract thinking had led him.

> There is no doubt that dramatic work appeared to me as the way out of the labyrinth into which I had been led by my abstract thinking; through it I hoped to emerge into the light of an organized human landscape. Nevertheless, the pattern of this landscape of which it was my aim to understand the structure, as I drew it in Seuil Invisible, in Quartet, or Iconoclaste was really not different from that of what I would call the subterranean region of myself, in which my thoughts struggled to understand itself and to ensure its grasp on a reality which continually eluded it.[1]

[1] Ibid., p. 80.

What Marcel is in effect saying is that abstract thought which ex natura involves objectivity can in no way reveal the reality that lies behind the human situation and the insolubilia which inevitably are discovered therein.

> But what is particularly clear to me now is that the dramatic mode of thought, dealing as it does with subjects as such - that is to say, with their reality as subjects - illustrated and confirmed in advance all that I was later to write on the purely philosophical plane concerning knowledge in its capacity to transcend objectivity.[1]

In a very true sense then, Marcel's perception of drama as being in the realm of subjectivity was an important factor in his later philosophical abandonment of objectivity in favor of subjectivity, of his forsaking of abstraction in favor of concrete approaches to being.

The atmosphere of his home was such that Marcel received no religious training. His father, reared a Catholic, became an agnostic. As an agnostic he was grateful for all that the Catholic Church had done for art, but he regarded its doctrine as obsolete and ridden with superstition. After the death of his mother, Marcel was reared by his aunt. She was a Jewess who had been converted to Protestantism but accepted only its most liberal interpretation. In addition, her attitude was permeated by a pessimism which was revealed in a discerning and inexorable sense of the absurdity of existence. In the face of what was to her an absurd existence, her modus vivendi was to forget oneself, to be of service to others, and to submit to a severe self-discipline. Marcel says that an invincible agnosticism was common to both his father and his aunt. Yet each expressed it differently; his father esthetically, his aunt morally. As Marcel now looks back at the agnosticism of his

---

[1] Ibid., p. 79.

guardians, he feels that he was surrounded by an arid and stale atmosphere which, in part, contributed to the incessant anxiety which beset him as a youth.

His memories of his school years are not pleasant ones. The demands for scholastic excellence which his parents imposed on him and the fact that the school ignored the modalities and variables of human development produced in Marcel an anxiety which he asserts was at the root of the hateful memories of his school years. When he entered the Lycee, he was repelled by the abstract character of what he was taught, embittered at the abstract or impersonal relationships which prevailed among and between his teachers and fellow students, and disgusted with the materials and methods of instruction because in his view they ignored the need for expression and creativity.

A strange duality rendered his universe a desert. That was the duality, consciously felt by him, between his mother and his aunt. Marcel always felt that his mother, a very gifted and exceptional person whose sudden death was so shattering an experience to him, remained present and mysteriously with him. His aunt, a surrogate parent, was also a very gifted person but her character was in sharp contrast to that of his mother's. Marcel's aunt was dominating and self-assertive and convinced of her duty to shape his mind. Marcel was under a dual influence; that of his mother who had vanished in death, and that of his aunt whose domination of Marcel was pervaded by her agnosticism and pessimism. The net result of this duality in his life was such that the anxiety which was his during his formative years was tinged with the sense of death and the irrevocable.

School holidays, providing as they did the opportunity to exercise his

love of travel, were a means of escaping from what he calls "his wasteland." It became evident to Marcel much later in his life that his love of travel to distant and unknown lands was not akin to that of the tourist, but, rather, was really a deep longing to establish the reality of being at home in these lands. Discovery which is so intimately bound up with travel awoke in Marcel the desire for the concrete, the philosophical explication of which has been his vocation for so many years.

When Marcel began his philosophical studies, his then present condition, if such an expression is permissible, was hewn out of the past. There can be no question but that he was gifted with brilliant intellectual, dramatic, and musical talents. His intellectual potential was actualized under the pressure of parents who themselves were brilliant students, and in the scholarly but arid environment of abstract personal relationships and subject matter which stifled creation and expression. His dramatic talents blossomed out of the loneliness of an only child who missed having brothers and sisters so desperately that he created imaginary characters with whom long conversations were held. His musical gift came forth out of the need to move in a supra-sensual world in which the insolubilia of character, outlook, and temperament were made harmonious. Marcel, so variously gifted, was reared in an atmosphere of agnosticism an essential note of which is the conviction that religious faith lacks the experiential proof so necessary to render it acceptable to an agnostic. His loneliness, his perception of the insolubles of personal relationships, parental pressure for scholastic excellence, his lack of religious faith, the sudden death of his mother produced in him an objectless fear tinged with a sense of death and the inexorable. Thus inwardly

accountered, he entered the domain of philosophy to seek a resolution of his interior turmoil; a resolution, perhaps at this time only obscurely felt, eventuating in the approach to being through fidelity, hope, and love.

Is it not possible that from an atmosphere of familial agnosticism Marcel absorbed, in a negative fashion, a lesson in the value of faith? Is it not possible that out of his familial agnosticism with its almost inevitable discussion as to the existence and nature of God came a later realization of the omnipresence of God and His presence in each of us? Does not his assertion that fidelity is the place of being have its negative roots in what can be described as the immediacy of a parental agnosticism which was the partial architect of his youthful anxiety which ultimately was existential, connected with being, and the value of his participation in it. In view of what Marcel has written about his life, an affirmative answer can be given to each of the questions just posited.

Marcel alludes to his morally and hygienically rigorous upbringing as the reason why abstraction was the mode of his early philosophic thought and contempt for Empiricism his attitude. His rejection of Empiricism remained only to be accompanied by his rejection of abstraction as a mode of metaphysical thinking. Metaphysics, as he was finally to conceive it, is concerned with the person in all his concreteness and the attendant implications of concreteness. This being so, a legitimate inference is that at the root of his philosophical rejection of abstraction as the proper mode of metaphysical inquiry is his early perception of the inability of the judgement to provide formulae resolutive of the insolubilia found in the character, outlook, and temperament of human beings as they engage in relations with one another.

Thus the contention of this chapter, and one which Marcel's own biographical exposition would uphold, is that his unique reactions to various and extremely significant experiences of his youth and childhood were assimilated into the very core of the personality that was his when he assumed the vocation of philosopher. The startling fact is that as a mature philosopher Marcel made the personal experiences of subjectivity and intersubjectivity grist for the wheel of reflective analysis as it grinds away in the mill of a metaphysics of invocation and appeal.

In 1928, Marcel became a Catholic. He had engaged in a debate with Leon Brunschvig on the subject of religious faith. His presentation in defense of religious faith so impressed Francois Mauriac that he wrote an open letter to Marcel in which he wrote, "Come, Marcel, why are you not one of us?" He decided to accept the invitation. On March 5, 1928, he wrote the following.

> I have no more doubts. This morning's happiness miraculous. For the first time I have experienced grace. A terrible thing to say, but so it is.
>
> I am hemmed in at last by Christianity - in, fathoms deep. Happy to be so! But I will write no more.
>
> And yet, I feel a kind of need to write. Feel I am stammering childishly..... This is indeed a birth. Everything is different.[1]

His Catholicism in no way caused Marcel to modify his philosophical position. He remained philosophically independent. His independence was justified in that his philosophy did not in any way run counter to the theology of the Church.

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Being and Having, trans. by Katherine Farrer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 15.

> To sum up my position on this difficult and important point, I would like to say that the recognition of the ontological mystery, in which I perceive as it were the central redoubt of metaphysics, is, no doubt only possible through a sort of radiation which proceeds from revelation itself and which is perfectly well able to affect souls who are strangers to all positive religion of whatever kind; that his recognition which takes place through certain modes of human experience, in no way involves the adherence to any given religion; but it enables those who have attained to it to perceive the possibility of a revelation in a way which is not open to those who have never ventured beyond the frontier of the problematical and who therefore have never reached the point from which the mystery of being can be seen and recognized. Thus, a philosophy of this sort is carried by an irresistible movement toward the light which it perceives from afar and of which it suffers the secret attraction.[1]

Marcel wrote some thirty plays. They stand in eloquent testimony to his greatness as a playwright. Marcel himself has characterized his dramatic work as the drama of the soul in exile.

> It was, in fact, a few weeks ago, while seeking for some general yet reasonably accurate designation for my dramatic work, that it occurred to me to call it the Drama of the Soul in Exile..... For me, the soul in exile is the soul which has become stranger to itself, who has lost its way.....It is certainly true that most of my heroes are unaware of what they are and of their own worth, and that they could echo the wish to Claude Lemayne at the end of Un Homme de Dieu — to be known as he really is; yet obviously this uncertainty about ourselves, however tragic, and however painful the light it throws on our condition, could not in itself constitute the basic principle in drama. But we are not alone, and only too often our uncertainty takes the virulent form of misunderstanding our own intentions and our own behaviour to other people. Once this happens, our misunderstanding inevitably becomes contagious and tends to spread misery and bewilderment.[2]

To enter into a discussion of dramatic works with the intention of further delineating the designation of his dramatic work as the drama of the soul in

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Three Plays, trans. by Rosalind Heywood and Marjorie Gabain (London: Secker and Warburg, 1952), p. 16.

[2]Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, trans. by Emma Craufurd (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 153.

exile would be inappropriate and beside the point whose establishment is here being attempted; that point being the parallelism that exists between the drama and the philosophy of Marcel. This parallelism becomes apparent when a comparison is made between the quotation cited above and what he stated in the essay on Value and Immortality which is included in Homo Viator.

> Perhaps a stable order can only be established if man is acutely aware of his condition as a traveller, that is to say, if he perpetually reminds himself that he is required to cut himself a dangerous path across the unsteady blocks of a universe which has collapsed and seems to be crumbling in every direction. This path leads to a world more firmly established in Being, a world whose changing and uncertain gleams are all that we can discern here below.[1]

Therefore, the center of Marcel's dramatic and philosophical attention is man the wayfarer who, having become stranger to himself and having lost his way, must cut a new and dangerous path through a collapsed and crumbling universe; a universe in which betrayal, despair, and hate are more and more becoming its characteristics. The path which leads to the new world of faith, hope and love is the freely chosen one of the existential altruism of being with others in the intersubjective nexus which is the true basis of the dispensibility, engagement, and authenticity that lead to that participation in the plenitude of Being for whom the human soul hungers. If such plays of Marcel as A Man of God, The Funeral Pyre, and Ariadne are read against the background of an understanding of his metaphysics, it becomes manifest that the parallelism of these differing modes of expression, dramatic and

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, trans. by Emma Crawford (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1951), p. 153.

philosophical, merge in a common subject matter - the existential travail of man the wayfarer.

Gabriel Marcel is also a musical composer of some note. However, his status as a composer is not as great as those of playwright and philosopher. But his musical work does bear a relationship to his drama and philosophy.

> .....at the same time, music offered me an irrefutable example of the kind of supra-rational unity which I believed to be the essential function of drama to establish and promote. This explains the bearing of the most important of my early works, The Quartet in A Sharp, on the connection between family tragedy, music, and pure thought.
>
> But what is particularly clear to me now is that the dramatic mode of thought, dealing as it does with subjects as such - that is to say, with their reality as subjects - illustrated and confirmed in advance all that I was later to write on the purely philosophical plane concerning knowledge in its capacity to transcend objectivity.[1]

The philosophy, drama, and music of this man give evidence of a deep need - the exigence for transcendence. By this is meant the exigence to go beyond the limits of objectivity; a going beyond, however, that is always situated within experience. In other words, Marcel's exigence for transcendence is a going beyond the rational to the inconceptualizable subjectivity of a higher personal experience participating in the plenitude of being.

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 79.

CHAPTER III

MARCEL AND THE ROLE OF THE PHILOSOPHER

Gabriel Marcel is very forthright in stating wherein he thinks the duty of the philosopher rests.

> I have a deep conviction, at least, that the fate of philosophy and civilisation are directly and intimately linked. Perhaps one might say that between the world of techniques and that of pure spirituality, the mediation of the philosopher is becoming more and more indispensable. Otherwise, there is the technician's attitude impinging on a domain that ought to remain inviolate; but, on the other hand, through a natural but dangerous reaction, there is a risk of those who pursue the purely spiritual life passing a verdict of condemnation on all techniques, a verdict that will not and cannot be put into practical effect, but that might, nevertheless, plunge many minds into a state of terrible confusion. There, no doubt, lies the greatest evil of our times. I have said in the first volume of my Clifford Lectures, The Mystery of Being, that we are living in a world that seems to be founded on the refusal to reflect. It is his place, and, perhaps, his place only, to attack this contemporary confusion, not in a presumptuous way certainly, not with any illusions about what the effect of his attack is likely to be, but with the feeling that here lies a duty from which he cannot withdraw himself without betraying his true mission.[1]

Though he maintained that the philosopher, and therefore philosophy itself, should confront the difficulties and confusions of the world, the philosophic confrontation should always be such that it remain within the bounds of philosophical competency. A philosopher worthy of the name should not indulge

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Man Against Mass Society, trans. by G. L. Fraser (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1965), p. 131-132.

in what Marcel describes as "mental masochisms" of shocking and offhand statements such as, "Gentleman, God is dead." Such statements as this and others, seemingly profound, are but parodies of the original utterances devoid of the anguish in which they were pronounced. In such cases, these statements are but cheap sensationalism which strip the original expression of all meaning. Nor should a philosopher identify himself with movements of whose purposes he is only dimly cognizant and of the area with which it is concerned he possesses no professional competence. The true philosopher, according to Marcel, is in the world, but not of it. He is not a mere spectator to what amounts to the existential absurdities of a non-reflective world. For Marcel, such a position is impossible to assume for the very reason that, being in the world, the philosopher cannot stand outside of it and observe its travail. He is a participant in the realities of civilization and is therefore inseparable from what is happening not only to civilization itself but also to the totality of those singular and unique persons who are deeply affected by what is occurring in the civilization and culture in which they are immersed. As such, therefore, the philosopher, equipped with special mental aptitudes and seized by urgent inner demands or exigencies, has the inescapable duty of mediating, the effectiveness of which is unknown and indeterminable, the existential confusion arising from an obscure longing or demand for the fulfillment of being in face of cultural elements that attempt to suppress this urge in favor of the evanescent pleasures that accrue to the human person in a functionalized and non-reflective world.

By Marcel's standards, the true philosopher is not a man of congresses. Neither should he, as does the peasant who works and guards his small patch of

land, cultivate philosophy as an inviolate patch of the intellectual preserve. Escape into the heights of mysticism is also unworthy of the authentic philosopher. Gabriel Marcel, unlike Heidegger who fled to the solitude of his mountain top, has chosen to continue as an active but recollected participant in the reality of the world constituted as it is by such overwhelming confusion that seems to counsel betrayal, despair, and hate. As Marcel conceives it, the role of the philosopher is best performed not by an hermetical isolation from our existential travail but, rather, by periodic solitude so essential to philosophical reflection on personal experiences in a troubled world; reflection that reveals their hidden meaning and exposes to light the suppressed demand for the plenitude of being.

It must be constantly borne in mind that the metaphysics of Marcel is personalist. Another way of putting it is that subjectivity is at the core of his metaphysics. Metaphysical analysis takes place within recollection and centers on one's personal experiences. In a very true sense, each person regards himself as the center of existence and tends to think that his reality as an existent is that which confers importance and concern to all that is occurring in the world. No inference of Ego-centrism is to be drawn from the existentially radial position of the individual person. From the centrality of individual experience, philosophical reflection reveals that to be is to be with others. In other words, Marcel's philosophy is the exposition and delineation of an existential altruism whose recognition and acceptance ultimately leads to a seizure of Being Par Excellence.

By this time, the inevitable question will have occurred; the question as to how Marcel views the world. The answers to that question are not difficult

to find. Using a speech by Christiane, the heroine of Le Monde Casse, he presents one of his characterizations of the world.

> Don't you feel sometimes that we are living.....if you can call it living.....in a broken world. Yes, like a broken watch. The mainspring has stopped working. Just to look at it, nothing has changed. Everything is in place. But put the watch to your ear, and you don't hear ticking. You know what I'm talking about, the world, what we call the world, the world of human creatures .....it seems it must have had a heart at one time, but today you would say that the heart has stopped beating.[1]

What Marcel is pointing out here is that the unity of the world is only apparent. Beneath this surface unity lies the true picture of a world that is at war with itself, and the war towards which it is pushing will be an Armaggedon such as will result in the suicidium mundi, the suicide of the world. In speaking of the unity of the world, Marcel seems to be pointing up the unity that results from the development, refinement, and application of modern science to communications, transportation, industry, and the military. Not only has national and international interdependence increased, but also distance and time between what heretofore had been widely separated areas of the world have decreased. These factors, which have contributed to the world a unity which it formerly in the recent past did not possess, have now become tools in a deadly and divisive struggle of the will to power. Propaganda fills the airwaves. Bombers and rockets capable of delivering the "bomb" have become decisive political instruments in the power struggle that engulfs the world. Inevitably, the alliances of yesteryears have devolved into the enmities of today. It is conceivable that a single conqueror's seizing

---

[1] Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, p. 26-27.

control of all military and civilian technical equipment would make both rebellion and opposition futile. Were this possibility to come to pass, slavery and terror would be the lot of mankind for an indefinite period. George Orwell's "Big Brother" would then be a reality.

But, as Marcel says, these remarks do not show how deep and how wide the break in the world is.

> The truth of the matter is that, by a strange coincidence and one which will not cease to exercise us during the course of these lectures, in the more and more collectivized world that we are now living in, the idea of any real community becomes more and more inconceivable.[1]

> To put it in quite general terms and in simpler language than Thibon's, I would say that we are living in a world in which the preposition "with" - and I might also mention Whitehead's "togetherness" - seems more and more to be losing its meaning; one might put the idea another way by saying that the very idea of a close human relationship (the intimate relationship of large families, of old neighbors, for instance) is becoming increasingly hard to put into practice, and is even being rather disparaged.[2]

> It is, or so it seems to me, by starting from the fact of the growingly complex and unified social organisation of human life today, that one can see most clearly wherein lies the loss, for individuals, of life's old intimate qualities. In what does this growingly complex organisation - this socialisation of life - really consist? Primarily, in the fact that each one of us is being treated more and more today as an agent whose behaviour ought to contribute toward the progress of a certain social whole, a something rather distant and rather oppressive, let us frankly say rather tyrannical. This presupposes a registration, an enrollment, not once and for all, like that of the new born child in the registrar's office, but again and again, repeatedly, while life lasts.....in the end I am in some danger of confusing myself, my real personality, with the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 34.

[2] Ibid.

State's official record of my activities.[1]

> The point here is.....that this strange reduction of a personality to an official identity must have an inevitable repercussion on the way I am forced to grasp myself; what is going to become of this inner life on which we have been concentrating so much of our attention.[2]

Thus does Marcel picture the world of human beings and what each individual can expect when he encounters it. The human person becomes increasingly enmeshed in the organization of a society that is becoming more and more collectivized and engaged in a deadly struggle of the will to power. As a member of such a society, he is subjected to repeated enrollments which enlarge the size of his official dossier with which he is in danger of identifying his real personality. But this is not the concluding word of Marcel in his setting forth of the world and its impact on the individual. He has more to add.

> The characteristic feature of our age seems to me to be what might be called the misplacement of the idea of function in its current sense which includes both the vital and social functions.[3]
>
> The individual tends to appear both to himself and others as an agglomeration of functions.[4]
>
> Traveling on the underground, I often wonder with a kind of dread what can be the inward reality of this or that man employed by the railroad - the man who opens the doors, for instance, or the one who punches the tickets. Surely everything both within him and outside him conspire to identify this man with his functions - meaning not only with his functions as worker, as trade union member, or as voter, but with his vital functions as well. The rather horrible expression "time table" perfectly describes his life. So many hours for each function.[5]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 34-35. [2] Ibid., p. 35.

[3] Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 1.

[4] Ibid., p. 1. [5] Ibid., p. 2.

> It is true that certain disorderly elements - sickness, accidents of every sort - will break in on the smooth working of the system. It is therefore natural that the individual should be overhauled at regular intervals like a watch.[1]
>
> As for death, it becomes, objectively and functionally, the scrapping of what has ceased to be of use and must be written off as a total loss.[2]

It should cause no wonder that Marcel is overcome with sadness at the sight of this broken and functionalized world, a world in which everything seems to conspire in the suppression of the sense of being. Deep within the functionalized person there stirs an uneasiness which will not be assuaged by the material comfort and ease which this world offers. This uneasiness grows out of a feeling that some horrible mistake has occurred, some gross misinterpretation of what man is has been implanted in defenceless minds by an inhuman social order and an inhuman philosophy. The technics of a scientific, technological, and industrial society of themselves are good, because they are expressions of the power of the human mind. If properly used, technics can ameliorate the sufferings and often intolerable conditions in which vast numbers of human beings live. But when influenced by a philosophy which tramples out with heavy tread all truly human values, when technics are given a place of superiority, and when these technics are employed by a nation or an alliance of nations in the struggle for power and survival, it is inevitable that the human person will be increasingly regarded as a collection of functions, as a thing devoid of any spiritual qualities, and as a functional thing to be manipulated by those in positions of power. Marcel regards

---

[1] Ibid., p. 3. [2] Ibid.

technical progress as a sin, as a manifestation of pride in a world which, for the most part, has rejected its dependence on God and finds its power and strength within itself. Lacking a true sense of human values, this world of technics has lost control of its controls, and progress outstrips the wisdom as to what should or ought to be done with it.

The crisis which confronts the world is metaphysical, and one which will not be obviated by social or political solutions. According to Marcel, there is a crisis of being which cannot be solved by the problematic approach of science and politics. The human person, individually and collectively, must become aware of the mystery of being. This awareness transcends objectivity and the problematic. When the world of human beings aspire to being, then function and technic will be put in their proper and subordinate role, namely, that of providing for the material well being of the human being who, possessing a sense of being, seeks the spiritual joy that ensues from a conscious and freely chosen participation in the plenitude of being.

There can be no question but that there is a manifest and essential connection between the thought of Marcel and the condition in which the world finds itself. However, granted the assumption of a world pervaded by a sense of being, one wonders what form Marcel's thought would have taken. Would it perhaps have been a philosophical commentary on the world's sense of being? Or would it have retained, with certain modifications, its present form and have been propounded as the metaphysical explication and justification for what was already in evidence, namely this sense of being? Leaving these speculations aside, the fact is that the domicile of Marcel's thought is not some ivory tower set apart from the turmoil of mankind, but, rather its home is this

troubled world of human persons. Marcel's philosophy is an appeal to the human person to reflect on his experiences in this world in order to penetrate to the mystery of, and participation in, being.

At this juncture, it should be noted that Marcel no longer regards himself as an Existentialist in philosophy. Through the abuse of popularization, Existentialism as a term has been emptied of any real meaning. In his Preface to the English edition of the Metaphysical Journal he wrote:

> One of my pupils asked me whether my philosophy could not be considered to be a kind of neo-Socratism. The term struck me very much, and on reflection, I wonder whether the description would not be the least inexact that could be applied to me. The term existentialism brought with it the worst of misunderstandings, and I now consider I have repudiated it once and for all. I pointed this out in Milan several months ago - and it was in Italy that the label of "Christian Existentialist" was first attached to me.[1]

For Marcel, the term neo-Socratism implies first and foremost an attitude of non-sceptical interrogation; second, an emphasis on communication in a "I-Thou" dialogue in which the "Thou" is given credit by the confident reliance which the I confers; third, a negative attitude towards the results that can be expected of any physics which deals with the purely natural and cannot escape objective categories. Perhaps another dimension of Marcel's admitted role as the Socrates Novus is the image of him, both personally and in his writings, wandering through the turbulent market places of a troubled world in the search for an audience of "Thou's" with whom he can carry on the dialogue about being. A further reason for the aptness of his designating himself as neo-Socratic is that his philosophical writings are in the first person; which necessarily implies that he is addressing himself as an "I" to an audience of "Thou's" on whom he can count, in whom he believes, and for

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. xii-xiii.

whom he is the mediator between the world of technics and the world of pure spirituality.

CHAPTER IV

PROBLEM AND MYSTERY

In the opening lines in the third chapter of The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, Kenneth Gallagher describes as classical the Marcellian distinction between a problem and a mystery. Exactly what Gallagher meant to convey by the term classical is not too clear. If he meant that the distinction was of the highest excellence, not much seems to be gained. If, however, he meant that it was important, he has understated the centrality that this distinction holds in Marcel's philosophy. Gallagher's use of the term classical is unfortunate because of its ambiguity. A more exact designation of the distinction between problem and mystery would be that it is a cardinal distinction because the whole of Marcel's philosophy hinges on it. It is the basis on which he sets up a demarcation between philosophy and science; the latter deals with problems, the former with mysteries. Undermine the distinction between problem and mystery, and the very foundation of Marcel's metaphysics crumbles. If, on the other hand, this distinction resists the assault of philosophical scrutiny and retains its force and authenticity, the net result is that all objective philosophies, including Thomism, are consigned to the ash-heap of the history of Philosophy.

In a very true sense, there is a similarity between Kant and Marcel. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant had set out to determine if metaphysics was possible. Now the validity of the Critique was directly proportional to the

validity of the synthetic a priori judgement. Kant never doubted for a moment that his formulation of this type of judgement was truly representative of the only kind that could yield truth based on a fact of experience and clothed with universality and necessity. It was on the basis of the validity of the synthetic a priori judgement that he was ultimately led to declare that speculative metaphysics was empty, illusory, and, although a natural tendency of reason, impossible. Kantianism, as demonstrative of the impossibility of speculative metaphysics, if not dead, is largely discredited; the reason being the inherent inability to validate the synthetic a priori judgement. In like fashion, Marcel's delineation of the nature of a problem and a mystery is never for a moment beclouded by the thought that the distinction that necessarily arises between them could be wrong. Marcel has founded the credibility of his metaphysics on the validity of his cardinal distinction. If he is wrong, he has played a losing game from beginning to end.

Whether or not Marcel is included in Maritain's assertion that Existentialists have a holy horror of objects, the fact is that Marcel makes extensive use of the term object. The meaning which he attached to that term is essential to a grasp of the distinction under discussion.

> As object as such, as I have said, is given as datum to a thought which sets aside the individual element in it. The object as such is defined as being independent of the characteristics that make me to be this particular person and not another person. Thus, it is essential to the very nature of object not to take "me" into account.[1]

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 261.

In stating that an object is a datum given to a thought which sets aside the individual elements in it, what Marcel means to convey is that thought in confronting the object strips it of the individuating characteristics that constitute the object as singular, and, in so doing, seizes it in its universal aspects or in those characteristics that make it common to all those in its class. An inescapable inference is that an object, whose very existential singularity and particularity constitutes its uniqueness in reality, can only be grasped intellectually by the thought (for which it is a datum) of human beings under the aspect of a universality which, by definition, excludes a knowledge of the object in its singularity. The object, presented as a datum to thought, can never be known qua singular.

Marcel's position that thought universalizes the object bears a striking resemblance to that of St. Thomas.

> On the contrary, the Philosopher says that the universal is known by reason, and the singular is known by sense.
>
> I answer that, our intellect cannot know the singular things directly and primarily. The reason for this is the principle of singularity in material things is individual matter; whereas our intellect, as we have said above, understands by abstracting the intelligible species from such matter. Now that which is abstracted from matter is universal. Hence, our intellect knows directly only universals.[1]

While Marcel is no Thomist and St. Thomas would not be comfortable with Marcel's metaphysics, these two philosophers, despite differences in vocabulary, are in agreement that the object has a double mode of existence; in the real order as singular, and in the intellectual order as universal.

---

[1] St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, I, Q. 85 ad. 1.

Etymologically, the term object is derived from the Latin verb objicere, meaning to throw in the way. Hence, an object is something that existentially is thrown in our way, something that confronts us in reality, something that presents itself to us in the order of existence. For example, a person taking a walk comes upon something that by its very presence confronts him and by so doing is rendered object to him. In thinking about this object, it becomes a datum for his thought. His thought about the object is such that in forming it the person, or more exactly, the intellect of the person, strips away the individual characteristics of this object in the very intellectualization that pronounces, "this flower is a rose." The essences apprehended by the concepts and affirmed as identical by the existential judgement do not seize what makes that particular flower to be that particular flower. In short, in the pronouncement of judgement, "this flower is a rose," the singularity of the flower eludes our grasp.

Implicit in the nature of the object is that its confrontation with the person is a juxtaposition, a state of being side by side. Now, when Marcel says that the object is independent of the characteristics that constitute his singularity, what he means to convey is that the juxtaposition involved in the very nature of the object necessarily entails a mutual standing outside of, a mutual standing away from, each other. In its being side by side with an observer, the object is in no way existentially affected by the singularity of the observer, is in no way circumscribed by, or enmeshed in, the singularity of the person to whom it is present. Hence, it follows that the object does not take the "me" into account.

Such is Marcel's view of the object, and a view essential to establishing

the distinction between a problem and a mystery.

When Marcel discusses the problematic and the meaning of problem, it is essential to emphasize that he always does so in terms of his definition of object, and particularly that part of the definition which declares the independence of the object in relation to the subject to whom it is present. The reason for emphasizing the definitional declaration of the relationship of the independence of the object from the observing subject lies in the perfect correspondence of the words from which each is derived. Problem is derived from the Greek verb proballo which means to thorw in front of. Object, as was previously noted, comes from the Latin verb objicere which means to throw in the way. Hence, both problem and object, for Marcel, are things which confront us. However, the usage of the terms differs and rests on the notion of solution indigenous to a problem. We encounter many objects which for us present no difficulties. When we do meet an object which is obstructing our progress towards a goal, we then encounter the object under the aspect of its being a problem because the difficulties of the object call for, or demand, a solution on our part. Briefly put, we solve problems but do not solve objects.

When a person is confronted by a problem, he works on the data intrinsic to the problem in order to arrive at a solution. But since both the problem and the data intrinsic to it are independent of his singularity and possesses no intrinsic necessity to take the "me" of him into account, the net result is that the problem solver is able to stand outside the problem, inspect it from all sides, and engage in the manipulation of the data in the attempt to achieve a solution. The point which Marcel is trying to make is that the

singularity or being of the person is in no way involved in a problem. The problem solver and the problem-object, while side by side, as it were, are nevertheless outside each other. The being of the problem solver does not in any manner encroach on the data of a problem.

Although Marcel discusses at some length the problematic, he does not furnish us with a direct definition of the term problem. Perhaps he felt that the essence of a problem is so obvious that no definition of it was necessary. However, this does not appear to be the case with the quiddity of a mystery.

> A mystery is a problem which encroaches upon its own data, invading them, as it were, and thereby transcending itself as a simple problem.[1]

What is intended in the citing of this definition is to point out that in the thinking of Marcel a problem is necessarily the negative side of mystery. In other words, a problem does not encroach upon its data. To understand, or more exactly, to delineate a problem in this manner, while legitimate, is not entirely satisfactory. The non-encroachment of a problem upon its data becomes clearly understood only in relationship to an explication of what is meant by the encroachment of a mystery upon its data. What is sought, then, is the setting forth of a more positive definition of problem, using, and fairly, it is hoped, Marcel's thought about object.

Accordingly, a problem is something which is a barrier to progress that has been thrown in front of a person whose thought about it and the data intrinsic to it sets aside the individual elements that constitutes the problem in its singularity, and, like the object, the barrier to progress in

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 8.

no way involves the singularity of the person whose progress it is obstructing. Hence, a problem, because of its juxtaposition to the individual confronting it, is independent of that individual; it is the independence of the problem which enables the person to work on the data intrinsic to, and available in, the problem without his Ego in all its singularity encroaching on that data. On the basis of what has just been stated, it is reasonable to conclude that Marcel would maintain that in the area of the problematic the singularity of both the problem and the person escape detection and consideration. Thought about a problem in the real order universalizes it in the order of knowledge. The same holds true for the solution to a problem; it is also universalised. Since the person, in all his singularity, is not involved, another person, or any number of other persons, with their universalizing tendency of mind, could be substituted for the original person who first encountered the problem. Solutions to problems are therefore available to anyone possessing the necessary skills to solve the problem. In other words, solutions to problems, since they are universal are impersonal. Being universal and verifiable, solutions become public property for any and all.

Marcel's position on the nature of problem is not merely academic; it invades the proscenium of the world as he conceives it to be. It is well to recall to mind that for him the world is a functionalised world; a world in which the idea of function has been so misplaced that the individual tends to appear to himself and others as an agglomeration of functions.

> It should be noted that this world is, on the one hand, riddled with problems and, on the other, determined to allow no room for mystery.....There exists in such a world, nevertheless, an

> infinity or problems, since the causes are not known to us in detail and thus leave room for unlimited research. And in addition to these theoretical puzzles, there are immmerable technical problems, bound up with the difficulty of knowing how the various functions, once they have been inventoried and labeled, can be made to work together without doing one another harm.[1]

Thus, this problematical world of function impinges on the individual in such wise as to strip him of his unique singularity and reduce him to the impersonal status of "anyone" or "everybody." The individual, submerged in his functions, is identified with them. Thus, he becomes the teacher, or the clerk, or the union member, and so on, as the case may be. This functionalized world stamps out the singularity of the person and reduces him to an object. In such a world, the individual is always open to the danger of falling into despair. As Marcel states:

> I have written on another occasion that, provided it is taken in its metaphysical and not its physical sense, the distinction between the full and the empty seems to me more fundamental than that between the one and the many. This is particularly applicable to the case in point. Life in a world centered on function is liable to despair because in reality this world is empty, it rings hollow; and if it resists this temptation, it is only to the extent that there comes into play from within it and in its favour certain hidden forces which are beyond its power to conceive or recognise.[2]

The fact that the functionalized world rings hollow to the individual who has been reduced to an agglomeration of functions indicates the presence of an obscure but deep inner urge for transcendence, a vague but profound urge or demand to go beyond his experience as a collection of universalized functions which have become the mark of his identity in a functionalized world.

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 3-4.

[2] Ibid., p. 3.

> But besides the sadness felt by the onlooker, there is the dull, intolerable unease of the actor himself who is reduced to living as though he were in fact submerged by his functions.[1]

> Let us notice in the first place that the need for transcendence presents itself above all, is deeply experienced above all, as a kind of dissatisfaction.[2]

> There would be no meaning in treating transcendence as a sort of predicate which could belong to one reality and not to another, on the contrary, the reference of the idea to the general human condition is fundamental.[3]

These deep inner stirrings of the functionalized man inevitably lead him to ask himself towards what this need for transcendence is directed and in what it will terminate? Marcel would answer that this transcendence, this going beyond, which is always within the limits of a deeply lived experience, is a transcendence to being. When the functionalized person, from the depths of a lived experience of the emptiness of the world that has so shaped him, becomes conscious of a deep urge to transcend or go beyond his present condition, at that moment he asks himself, "What is being," "What am I?" "Who am I who questions being?" From the moment that the individual poses these questions, he has left the realm of problem and has passed into the domain of mystery.

It seems judicious to initiate an incursion into Marcel's conception of mystery by immediately clearing away certain obfuscations that might come to mind. Mystery, as Marcel conceives it, is not to be confused or identified with a theological mystery such as the Incarnation, or The Holy Trinity.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 3.

[2] Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, p. 52.

[3] Ibid., p. 56.

> Speaking more particularly to Catholics, I should like to note that from my own standpoint the distinction between the natural and the supernatural must be rigorously maintained. It will perhaps be objected there is a danger that the word "mystery" might confuse this very issue.
>
> I would reply that there is no question of confusing those mysteries which are enveloped in human experience as such with those which are revealed, such as the Incarnation or Redemption, and to which no effort of thought bearing on experience can enable us to attain.[1]

Since Marcel has restricted mystery to the natural plane of envelopment in human experience, what is his definition of mystery? The answer is provided in the two following quotations.

> A mystery is a problem which encroaches on its own data, invading them, as it were, and thereby transcending itself as a simple problem.[2]
>
> A mystery, on the other hand, is something in which I find myself caught up and whose essence is not to be before me entirely.[3]

What is being? When the individual puts that question to himself, he is in the realm of mystery; he is confronted by a problem which encroaches on its own data and whose essence is not entirely before him. The individual is enmeshed in being. It is impossible, according to Marcel, for the person, who himself is a being, to stand outside of and away from being while pursuing its meaning. He is a datum which is encroached upon by the problem of being. His encroachment derives from the very fact of his participation in being. The essence of being is not only outside him, it is also within him inasmuch as he is a being. When a person asks, "What is being?" he, as questioner, in all his

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 30.

[2]Ibid., p. 8.

[3]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 100.

singularity is involved in the question itself. The singularity of the individual embraces not only his particular intellect, but also the whole complexus of those physical, emotional, connative, and volitional characteristics that make him to be the unique individual that he is. And it is in the uniqueness of his singularity that the individual encroaches on the data of the problem which Marcel calls the mystery of being. Unlike a problem, it is of the very essence of mystery to take the "me" into account. When the person is seized by the realization that he himself is involved in his question as to the meaning of being, he is forced to ask the question, "Who and what am I?" Once again he finds himself confronted by a mystery because he cannot stand outside and away from himself in the attempt to find the answer. Knowing who and what he is, is essential to an adequate answer as to what being is.

> Doubtless it is legitimate to establish certain distinctions within the unity of the being who thinks and who endeavors to think himself; but it is only beyond such distinctions that the ontological problem can arise and it must relate to that being seen in all his comprehensive unity.[1]

> We are now embarking upon the question on which, really, all the other questions hang; it is the question I put to myself when I ask myself who I am, and more deeply still, when I probe into my meaning in asking myself that question.[2]

Metaphysics, as Marcel conceives it, is grounded in mystery; the mystery of being, the mystery of the person or the self, the mysteries of faith, hope, and love, and the mystery of God Himself. But what must be emphasised above all is that the person, in the all embracing unity of his singularity, is the

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 7.

[2]Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, p. 103.

existential fulcrum of metaphysics. In brief, subjectivity is the hallmark of Marcel's metaphysics.

An inescapable result of Marcel's position is that the problematic, which ex natura is enveloped in objectivity and universal characterization is, excluded from metaphysics. Now the problematic, by definition, involves the notion of result or solution. Once a solution has been achieved, the problem is no longer a problem. However, an achieved solution not only obviates the problem, it also continues to live a life, as it were, independent of the means by which it was accomplished. It becomes public property available to anyone equipped with the essential skills to employ it. In brief, solutions to problems, according to Marcel, are not only terminative of the problem, but are also impersonal in that they are objective and universal. He cites the results of scientific experiments which are used by scientists and technicians who are totally unacquainted with the experimental means which the original discoverer employed in arriving at the particular solution in question. For Marcel, metaphysics yields no final results. The mysteries of ontology constantly renew themselves and are possessed of a profundity that defy definitive and final results. Whatever the results that may occur, they are private and personal, rather than public and impersonal; they are inseparable from the mediating work that achieved them. What Marcel is trying to convey is that the metaphysical quest of being is intimately personal and that, as a consequence, the ontological results are inseparable from the work and travail of the unique person involved in their formulation.

> To both Optimism and Pessimism I answer that: there is no objectively valid judgement bearing on being.[1]
>
> It behooves us to renounce, once and for all, the naively rationalist idea that you can have a system of affirmation valid for a thought in general or for any consciousness whatsoever. Such thought as this is the subject of scientific knowledge, a subject which is an idea, but nothing else. Whereas the ontological order can only be recognized personally by the whole of a being, involved in a drama which is his own, though it overflows him infinitely in all directions - a being to whom the strange power has been imparted of asserting or denying himself. He asserts himself insofar as he asserts being and opens himself up to it; or he denies himself by denying being and closes himself to it. In this dilemma lies the very essence of freedom.[2]

A recapitulation of the opposed characteristics of problem and mystery is offered as a summary which may serve in obtaining a firmer grasp of the distinction which Marcel has made.

1. A problem is a datum given to thought which is impersonal and universal.
2. A mystery is a datum given to thought which is personal and subjective.
3. A problem does not take "me" into account.
4. A mystery does take "me" into account.
5. A person, being outside the problem, escapes encroachment by the problem.
6. A person, being both inside and outside the mystery is encroached upon by the mystery.
7. A problem permits inspection from all sides.
8. A mystery allows no such inspection since the very being of the person is involved in it.
9. A problem is capable of a final solution.

---

[1] Marcel, Being and Having, p. 120-121.

[2] Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 98.

10. A mystery is incapable of final results and in constantly renewing itself.

11. Solutions to problems live a life independent of the means of achievement.

12. The results of mystery are not final and are inseparable from the means used to achieve them.

It is on this basis of these opposed characteristics that Marcel draws his distinction between problem and mystery. The distinction between them is ontological; it holds in the order of reality. The nature of each is such that neither one can become the other. The world of the problematic is the world of science which, dealing as it does with objects, is impersonal, is concerned with the universal, and adopts the manipulative methodology of experimentation in order to establish that in which it is most interested, namely, the control of objects. The realm of mystery is the metaphysical world of being, the existential fulcrum of which is the singular person whose participation in being renders metaphysics a subjective and personal appeal to yield to the deep and personal inner urge to transcend this problematic world and to enter into a fuller participation in the plenitude of being.

Is the distinction between problem and mystery valid? At this point, a personal observation must be stated. In setting forth Marcel's distinction and the bases on which it is founded, a certain uneasiness was experienced; an uneasiness which centered on the vague and obscure feeling that somehow the distinction did not ring true, that somehow it was defective. This uneasiness can be ascribed, no doubt, to a bias which derives from a Thomistic background which holds to the objective validity of intellection and metaphysics. It was quite natural, therefore, for one adhering to an objective epistemology and metaphysics to feel ill at ease with a metaphysics which, by

definition, excludes any form of objectivity. Hence, it must be emphasized that the questioning of the validity of the distinction between problem and mystery is pervaded by the feeling that somehow the distinction rings hollow. Having set forth a personal reaction, which in all honesty should have been declared, a personally more comfortable approach can now be made in the attempt to examine the validity of the most fundamental distinction to be found in the whole of Marcel's metaphysics.

What, precisely, is meant by the statement that there is a distinction between problem and mystery? The most obvious answer is that one is not the other; in other words, a problem is not a mystery, and a mystery is not a problem. But this response, which, out of courtesy, is designated as superficial, leaves untouched the basic reason for the difference between them. Let us add immediately that for Marcel the distinction is not one of reason. On the contrary, it is a real one; one which holds in the ontologic order. Perhaps a definition of distinction will be of service. A distinction is the lack of unity or oneness between two or more things. The basis for this lack of unity is a difference in essence. In other words, a distinction is the lack of unity or oneness, based on a difference in what makes them to be what they are, between two or more things. According to Marcel, the essence of problem is that it does not encroach upon the "me" or the singular being of the problem solver as a datum intrinsic to it; the essence of mystery is that the "me" is a datum intrinsic to it and upon which mystery encroaches. It is on the basis of their lack of oneness, due to differing essences, that Marcel maintains that mystery and problem are really distinct from each other.

Before coming to grips with the question of the validity of this

distinction, the meaning of the term valid, in terms of the context in which it is being used, should be set down. In relation to the term distinction, it means well founded, soundly based, capable of being defended, not open to objection. Hence, when the question whether the distinction between problem and mystery is valid is posited, the meaning of that question is this; is the distinction between problem and mystery, based as it is on a lack of oneness in essence, well founded, capable of being defended, not open to objection? Perhaps it will be objected that the explication of what is meant by a valid distinction is a pedantic grasp of the obvious. In response it can be said that what leads oftentimes to unnecessary lacunas of thought is the very assumption of obviousness. The onus of pedantry is willingly assumed if it obviates possible intellectual obfuscation.

As one examines the meanings which Marcel assigns to problem and mystery, it becomes patent that the person as a singular human being is the criterion by which a problem is a problem and a mystery is a mystery. If the "me" of the person is in juxtaposition to the problem and merely presupposed, the problem remains simply what it is - a problem. If, however, the "me" of the person is not outside the problem but is inescapably and intrinsically involved, the problem as problem is transcended and rendered a mystery - a problem which encroaches on its own data. Accordingly, the position of the "me" of the person is that by which scientific (problematic) knowledge is demaracated from philosophical (meta-problematical) knowledge. Since the singularity or "meness" of the person is merely presupposed and juxtaposed, scientific knowledge is legitimately objective. In other words, the objectivity of scientific knowledge is valid only on the condition that the

singularity of the subject is not taken into account. When, on the other hand, the singularity of the person is involved as being an intrinsic element in a situation, then objective knowledge is ruled out, and, if the knowledge gained is denominated as objective, it is not in this instance valid. In brief, metaphysics, for Marcel, is not and cannot be problematic and objective; it is meta-problematical and non-objective. The reason that Marcel maintains that metaphysics is meta-problematical is that conceptual knowledge of the singularity qua singularity of the person intrinsically involved in a mystery is not possible. Not only is this not possible, but it is not even desirable because objective knowledge or knowledge by mode of concept reduces the person, as singular subject, to an object.

Marcel's insistence on the metaphysical centrality of the person or, rather, the singularity of the person is understandable when studied against the backgrounds of Idealism and Empiricism. The former would make the person but a mode of the Absolute in alienation from itself in the finite world of nature. At base, the person is but a mode of the Absolute Idea and eventually will be reabsorbed into the universality of the Absolute. In a very true sense, Idealism has never granted to man either his singularity or its permanence; the reason being that he is but as aspect of Universal Mind, which aspect was engendered by the triadic process by which Universal Mind becomes once again aware of itself. Pantheistically speaking, the person is an infinitesimal and finite speck of the infinite. At base, man is Universal Mind. Empiricism, which, according to Marcel, centers on essence to the exclusion of existence or the existential aspect, treats the person as a scientifically universalized object subject to research, experimentation, and

eventual control. The approach of Empiricism is such that the singularity and the existential aspect of singularity not only eludes its grasp but, ex natura, are excluded from consideration. What should be pointed out here is that contrary to what Marcel maintains, modern science is not interested in essence, whether it be that of man or anything else. It is concerned only with quantifiable and verifiable phenomena. Therefore, the inescapable conclusion is that not only does modern science disregard the existential aspect of man, it does not even consider man in his essential aspects. The objective universalizations of science center on appearances. Thus neglected in his existence and essence, the singularity of the person is lost in the universalizations about appearances. The objectivity of both Idealism and Empiricism is a distortion that should be rejected out of hand. The upshot of the whole situation was that Marcel not only rejected the distorted objectivity of Idealism and Empiricism but also objective knowledge as such; it could gain no foothold in his metaphysics.

> To both Optimism and Pessimism alike I answer that: There is no objectively valid judgement bearing on being.[1]

> During the last two chapters, but particularly during the last one, we have come gradually to acknowledge how impossible it is not only to give, on one's own account, an objective answer to the question, "Who am I?" but also even to imagine the valid giving of such an answer by anybody else who was considering one's life from the outside. Little by little, we have been forced to insist that my life is essentially ungraspable; that it eludes me and indeed eludes, in all directions, itself.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 98.

[2] Marcel, Mystery of Being, p. 210.

> Without using the words necessarily in the scholastic sense, we may now say that the object of our inquiry is being par excellence; but we must also admit that, inasmuch as it is being, this being refuses to allow itself to be posited as an object, as a quid, as something that can be garnished with a given number of predicates.[1]

As was previously stated, Marcel maintains that knowledge by concept of the person in his singularity is not possible, metaphysically speaking. To put it another way, subjectivity as subjectivity is not knowable conceptually. This applies not only to oneself as subject but also to all other existent subjects qua subjects. Certainly there can be no disagreement on this. As Maritain says:

> Subjectivity as subjectivity is inconceptualisable; is an unknowable abyss. It is unknowable by the mode of notion, concept, or representation, or by mode of any science whatsoever - introspection, psychology, or philosophy.[2]

The thrust of Marcel's position on one's conceptual knowledge of himself as subject is not only to affirm its impossibility but also, because of this impossibility, to exclude objective knowledge from metaphysics which he grounds in the mystery of being. If the subject is incapable of knowing himself as subject, and if he is involved as an intrinsic datum in the mystery of being which, by definition, excludes objective knowledge, conceptual knowledge of either subject or object has no foothold in metaphysics. Hence, then, does the subject ascend to being? The answer for Marcel is that the ascent to being is achieved through faith, hope, and love which are themselves mysteries.

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, II: Faith and Reality, p. 57.

[2]Jacques Maritain, Existence and the Existent, trans. by Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Image Books, 1958), p. 77.

The following question might arise: is there any way by which we may know ourselves as subjects? The answer is that there are three ways. Jacques Maritain addresses himself to this and states that we do have some knowledge of ourselves as subjects. According to him, there are three distinct forms of knowledge that yield a knowledge of subjectivity as such; practical knowledge which judges both moral matters and the subject itself; poetic knowledge in which subjectivity and the things of the world are revealed in a creative work; mystical knowledge in which love of God becomes the vehicle by which the subject comes to a seizure of himself as subject. But in reference to these forms of knowledge Maritain states:

> But in none of these instances is the knowledge of subjectivity as subjectivity, however real it may be, a knowledge by mode of knowledge, which is to say, by mode conceptual objectisation.
>
> In none of these instances is it philosophical knowledge. It would be a contradiction in terms to seek to make a philosophy of that sort of knowledge, since every philosophy - like it or not - proceeds by concepts.....Philosophy runs against an insurmountable barrier in attempting to deal with subjects, because, while philosophy knows subjects, it knows them only as objects.1

If, as Marcel maintains, a mystery cannot be reduced to a problem, how is it thinkable? All thought objectises the singular existent subject. It would appear that there is a problem of mystery. Marcel's attempts to reply to this objection implying, as it does, the contradiction involved in thinking of a mystery. He draws a distinction between thinking and thinking of.

> In brief, thinking does not come to bear on anything but essences. Note the depersonalisation, while perfectly allowable in this case,

---

[1] Ibid., p. 79.

> is impossible in the order of thinking of. Only a certain person can think of a certain person or a certain thing.[1]

His response is just that - a response. And that is its defect because it fails to settle the issue at stake in the objection. In thinking of a certain person, that certain person or subject is still known as object and not as subject. The structure of the mind is such that both the act of thinking and thinking of objectises what is thought. Further, the writings of Marcel bear witness to the inescapable necessity of objectising what is thought. Nowhere in his works can there be found a single sentence, symbolic of the act of judgement, which does not contain at least one universal term. Nor could this be otherwise, since the very nature of our minds is that it is impossible to form a judgement entirely devoid of a universal idea. To universalize is to objectise. Maritain has truly stated:

> Philosophy is registered whose and entire in the relation of intelligence to object.[2]

---

[1] Marcel, Being and Having, p. 31.

[2] Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 79.

CHAPTER V

BEING AND THE DEMAND FOR BEING

Marcel's doctrine on being is certainly not a rethinking of previously formulated positions. In terms of his insistence on subjectivity, this is obviously true. His doctrine is original with him. It is interesting to note that he had developed his position while Sartre was still a child. Original as it is, its delineation was surrounded with the difficulties inherent in any non-systematic presentation. What is really a conclusion is here used as a compact and summary description: Marcel's metaphysics is not a metaphysics of being as such, but, rather, a metaphysics of being.

Since the individual person is the existential fulcrum in Marcel's metaphysics, a pertinent and relevant beginning can be made by situating an imaginary individual in his place in the modern world. It may be objected that this violates the spirit of the "I-Thou" dialogue so dear to Marcel. With this there can be no disagreement. It might be added, however, this dissertation, written in the third person as it is, but yet another violation of that spirit. Notwithstanding, the reason for so situating an imaginary individual is the gaining of a greater understanding of Marcel's thought, and that is its only justification.

In the view of Marcel, each individual is free to engage in the quest of being. The choice is his; he may accept or refuse the quest. Being is present in the world in which he lives. The world of technics, although it appears

intent on trampling out being, can never succeed in this suppression. Being is, has been, and always will be present in the world. Modern man can discover, or, more exactly, recover being if he will be reflect.

Thomas Jones is married, the father of two children, and lives in an expensive home in an upper-middle class suburb. He is a college graduate with a degree in engineering and is employed by a large corporation as a salesman of their heavy industrial equipment. His style of living testifies to the fact that he earns a very excellent salary. He is rapidly paying off the mortgage on his home, owns two cars, and belongs to a very exclusive country club. His wife and children have all the advantages that affluence can provide. She is a member of a variety of clubs, and is chairman of the entertainment committee of the country club. One of the children is a sophomore in college, and the other is a junior in high school. Jones has no religious affiliations.

The nature of his work is such that he travels quite extensively and is therefore away from home a good deal of the time. The continuity of his married life, those intimate relationships between husband and wife and father and children, is constantly being interrupted. This has resulted in a certain coolness and distance on the part of both him and his wife. His children have grown up without really knowing him as a father. The upshot of the whole situation is that his wife regards him as the provider of the hearth and the surety of her continuing those expensive social activities which have become so important to her. The children regard him in much the same way.

In the course of his position, his contacts with his customers are such that he is regarded as an excellent and efficient salesman; one with whom it

is a pleasure to do business. His firm is highly pleased with his work and rewards him accordingly. In fact, Jones is about to be promoted to the position of assistant general sales manager which entails a handsome increase in salary.

His social life, which centers about the country club, involves going to a variety of parties, tournaments, and cocktail gatherings. At all of these affairs there is a great deal of talking but little that could qualify as real conversation. It is always the same faces that greet him whenever he goes to the club, and they regard him as Tom Jones the successful salesman, the fellow who owns one of the best homes in the suburb, the ardent party goer, and the club's best golfer.

Jones has reaped the rewards which an affluent technological, industrial, and scientific society bestows on those who lead in the competitive race for success. Jones, seemingly, has it made. But only seemingly, for deep within him there stirs a vague uneasiness or dissatisfaction. For the last few years this sense of unease has been gnawing at him at home, at work, and during the course of his social activities. More and more, the life he is leading rings hollow. He is beset with a tedium which he cannot fathom and which is inclining him more and more to view life as an absurb race, the reward of which is a further incentive to continue. He is on the verge of despair which, when and if he reaches it, will manifest itself in the exclamation and attitude that nothing is, that there is nothing that can withstand critical reflection, that nothing is of value.

Does Jones have a way out? Marcel would say that he has. It will be the thrust of this and the following chapter to show how Marcel, as a mediator

between the world of technics and the world of spirituality, proffers the escape route of an appeal constituted by his existential and personalist metaphysics of being. The objection might arise that the situational example is peculiar only to Tom Jones and therefore lacks the characteristic of universality. But that is precisely the point. There can be no question but that each individual's experiences are uniquely his. For Marcel, the lifeblood of metaphysical reflection is the experiences of the individual as a singular person. The commonality in any number of examples of what amounts to the existential travail of a complete man of technics, of a man thoroughly shaped by the modern world, resides in the deep dissatisfaction which these experiences induce. The sine qua non of the ascent to being is metaphysical reflection on the ontological import of those experiences.

In The Gifford Lectures Marcel states that the need for transcendence is the mainspring of his metaphysical enquiry. The term need is to be interpreted as a deep inner demand; transcendence as that of going beyond. Hence, the beginning of the quest of being is situated in the individual's demand to go beyond. To go beyond what? This will be answered shortly, but what is important at the moment is to point out how the need for transcendence manifests itself.

> Let us notice in the first place that the need for transcendence presents itself above all, is deeply experienced above all, as a kind of dissatisfaction.[1]

Referring back to our example, we see that Jones, in looking back at his life as he has thus far lived it, experiences a feeling that his life is empty,

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, p. 52.

experiences a demand, that surges from the depths of Jones himself, to go beyond his present condition. It is within recollection that Jones encounters himself and sees the gap between himself and his being. There is a reluctance to accept the identification of his self with his functions. Function simply will not stand up to critical reflection as possessing intrinsic value such that it would be worthy of being that which he is. Hence, there is a demand to go beyond. To what? To that which he is, Marcel would say. But there is more than a horizontal aspect to this need for transcendence; there is also the demand for vertical transcendence - to go beyond to being par excellence. But this demand for going beyond to being must, according to Marcel, occur within experience because outside of experience there is nothing. As a free agent, Jones is at liberty to accept or reject this need. In other words, he can choose to continue leading the functionalized life that has been his, or he can opt to go beyond to being. His final choice will be manifested in whether or not he reflects, for reflection is essential to any grasp of the ontological.

Perhaps, this is the opportune time to bring out what Marcel means by recollection. It seems best to let him speak for himself.

> Roughly, we can say that where primary reflection tends to dissolve the unity of experience which is first put before it, the function of secondary reflection is essentially recuperative; it reconquers that unity.[1]

> The word means what it says - that act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this grasp upon myself is also relaxation and abandon.[2]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 102.

[2] Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 12.

> It is within recollection that I take up my position - or, rather, I become capable of taking up my position - in regard to my life. I withdraw from it in a certain way, but not as the pure subject of cognition; in this withdrawal I carry with me that which I am and which perhaps my life is not. This brings out the gap between my being and my life.[1]

Jones is free to deny this need for transcendence. Marcel would say that the very structure of the world would seem to counsel such a denial by the fact that it encourages the refusal to reflect. A refusal to reflect is a refusal to allow for mystery which is tantamount to a refusal of being. This denial of being carries with it certain dangers. An unreflected life is always ringed about with the very real possibility of tedium which could become so pervasive that it could eventuate in despair and suicide. But what is being? Since Jones is involved in the question, another question must be posited. Who am I who questions being? Jones soon discovers that the opacity of his being disqualifies him from answering the question as to who he is. Marcel would say that not only is he not qualified to answer but also that nobody else is.

> When I ask myself, "Who am I, I who interrogate myself about my own being?" I have an ulterior motive, there is a more fundamental question I want to ask myself: it is this, "Am I qualified to answer this question?" Ought I not be afraid, in fact, just because the answer to the question, "Who am I?" will finally be my own answer, that it will not be a legitimate answer. But such a fear implies an assumption of the following sort: that if a legitimate answer can be finally given to the question, "Who am I?" it cannot be given by myself but only by someone else..... But in this case as in the preceeding one it is I who bestow upon my supposedly pitiless judge the necessary authority to pronounce against me what, let me repeat, I and I alone have chosen to regard as a sentence from which there is no appeal.[2]

The conclusion which Marcel draws is both expected and inevitable

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[2] Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, pp. 182-183.

> We must reject the idea of there actually being a legitimate answer, an objectively valid answer to the question: "Who am I?" - which is as much to say, "What am I worth?" - is a riddle that at the human level, simply cannot be solved.[1]

Because neither the individual nor anybody else can supply the answer to the question, "Who am I?" the question is transformed into an appeal sent out beyond those who were thought to possess the right to answer; it is a supra-empirical appeal sent out beyond the limits of experience to an Absolute Thou, the last resource for the troubled human spirit.

Accordingly, the net result as far as Jones is concerned is that neither he nor any other human being knows who he is. Deep within himself the humanly unanswerable question now becomes an appeal, an entreaty to the Absolute Thou who can be none other than God Himself. Only God can supply the answer; only God knows who Jones really is. In effect, what Marcel is saying is that only God can know the person as subject and thus do justice to his being. It is thus that Marcel safeguards the person from the Sartrean world from which the Absolute Thou is excluded; a world in which man, the project, wonders about asking "Who am I?" and knowing full well no answer will be forthcoming because there is no one who knows him in the depth of his being.

It seems that the whole of his metaphysics is permeated by a belief to which he firmly adhered and which was prior to his ontological formulations. That belief is the belief in the existence of God and His omnipresence both within and without us. In fact, for Marcel, the need for transcendence is the need for God.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 184.

> We could say, I believe, in future that the exigence of God is simply the exigence of transcendence disclosing its true face, a face that was shown to us before shrouded in veils.[1]

Hence, the need for transcendence, which, for Marcel, is the springboard of metaphysics is the exigence of God; an exigence which is deeply and obscurely experienced prior to any metaphysical quest of being. Marcel's metaphysics does not terminate in a theodicy which establishes the existence of a Supreme Being. On the contrary, God's existence runs, as it were, before metaphysics, and a belief in His existence underpins the whole of Marcel's ontological doctrine. But he is emphatic in declaring that only a believing consciousness can decide what can or cannot be regarded as God.

> Let us accordingly lay it down once for all, as emphatically as possible, that it is only the living witness, that is to say, the believing consciousness which can decide what can or cannot be regarded as God. I shall lay it down as a principle - and this postulate will doubtless become clarified later - that it is beyond the power of any philosophy (we can leave theology out of it for the moment) to force a coup e'etat which installs God as something which the believing consciousness refuses to recognize as such.[2]

This is an amazing statement. It appears to evince, without equivocation, that the characterization of that Being which is the Term of the need for transcendence is left up to the believing individual in whom this Being is already present and for Whom he experiences such a deep demand. Marcel seems to be saying that God as existent and present in the individual is opaquely believed in but that stating what He is or is not is a matter for the believing individual. But this only seems to be the case. What Marcel really means by

---

[1] Ibid., II, p. 4.

[2] Ibid., p. 4.

that statement is that God is beyond all characterization. God simply is. His position in this regard is understandable in terms of what he understands an object to be. An object is that which is capable of characterization and, therefore, judgement about it is possible. To characterize God is to reduce him to object. But, in the thinking of Marcel, this is patently impossible because God is not an object; He is a mystery.

> God cannot and must not be judged. For judgement is only possible regarding essence. That explains why every kind of theodicy must be condemned because a theodicy necessarily implies a judgement, it is a judgement of justification. Now God cannot be justified. The thought that justifies is the thought that has not yet been elevated to love and to faith that claims to transcend mind (belief). Theodicy is atheism.[1]

In saying that no judgemental characterization about what God is, is possible, Marcel seems to be implying either of two things: either God's essence eludes human intellectual seizure, or, that, identical with His existence, God's essence is beyond characterization. Marcel's assertion about so fundamental a matter as what God is seems cavalier. But having posited the basic distinction between problem and mystery, he has no other choice. If he wishes to remain consistent with it, he has no choice but to accept the necessary implications involved in it. For him to say that God is characterizable would be to vitiate his entire metaphysics. His treatment of theodicy is harsh. His declaration that theodicy, as judgemental characterization of God, is atheism is an assertion without demonstration. But then it should be remembered that Marcel is safely ensconced in his position that his metaphysics is not demonstrative but appellate. And for that reason how could he prove that

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 64.

theodicy is atheism? But is not Marcel himself guilty of characterizing God when he says:

> God can be given to me only as an Absolute Presence.[1]
> God is a living God.[2]
>
> By faith, I affirm that God is the Father of all men.[3]
>
> God is the Absolute Thou who can never be a him.[4]

It would appear that, despite whatever justification he pro-offers for so doing, he is caught in the wheels of his own condemnation. If God's nature is beyond essence and therefore beyond objective characterization, and if God's existence or presence is inconceptualizable, how can Marcel say, as he does, that God is an absolute, a Thou, a Father, or any other attribute. These are designations of essence or nature. It appears that characterization has invaded the proscenium of mystery from which it was to have been excluded. Viewed from the strict application of Marcel's distinction between mystery and problem, all that can be said about the Term of transcendence is that He is; what He is escapes us in all directions in much the same fashion as does knowing who we are.

Having set forth what are hopefully described as the essentials of his position on the need or demand for being, it is now time to turn to a consideration of Marcel's doctrine on Being. What does he mean when he says that being is plenitude? When he says that being is freely affirmed, is

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 70.

[2]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 65.

[3]Ibid., p. 66. [4]Ibid., p. 137.

fullness, and will not frustrate our expectations, what does he mean? When we affirm or deny being, what is Marcel's conception of what we are affirming or denying? In short, what does he mean by being?

Marcel's view of being is that there is something in reality that resists the critical analysis of a nihilistic pessimism that declares that nothing matters, that reality is a tale told by an idiot.

> Being is what withstands - or what would withstand - an exhaustive analysis bearing on the data of experience and aiming to reduce them step by step to elements increasingly devoid of intrinsic or significant value.[1]

An examination of Marcel's statement shows the intimate relation of being and value. Being is of value. Being and value are not to be thought as convertible and, thereby, identical. Actually Marcel holds that value is not sought because it is being, but rather that being is sought because it is valuable or of value. The value of being is obscurely manifested in the need for transcendence which ultimately is the exigence of God. Marcel defines being in terms of the appetite of being. Unlike an object which can be thought of without the appetite for it entering in as constitutive of the intellection of the object, he seems to hold that the thought of being is inseparable from an appetite for it. This raises the question how his definition can be clothed with the robes of legitimacy since appetite is distinguishable only in terms of its object. A resort to appetite to define being is of doubtful propriety, and the best that can be said is that such a resort classifies the definition as dialectical in that that which is defined is defined in terms of what is

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 5.

extrinsic to it. Appetite is extrinsic to the intellect. However, it must be remembered that, taking into account Marcel's overall position, he had no other place to go. Metaphysics, as he conceives it, is exclusive of objective knowledge, and it approaches to being are love, faith, and hope, with all of which value is essentially connected. Faith in, love of, and hope for being would be exercises in futility if being is devoid of value. So it seems reasonable to say that Marcel probably maintains that we can conceive being only in the function of appetite for it. In other words, being is unthinkable apart from appetite for it.

What, then, does Marcel mean by being? Outside of his provisional definition, he really does not say. The lack of a clear statement of what he means is a source of irritation and frustration in the attempt to obtain a clear grasp of his thought. His refusal, and no other word is more appropriate, to reveal his meaning is understandable in the light of his fundamental posture that to define is to reduce the defined to an object. It goes without saying that for him being is not and cannot ever become an object. Perhaps some degree of understanding can be gained through the opposition of being to Having, Existence, and "my Life."

Being and Having.

Marcel sets up a number of criteria which must be met before Having can be regarded as such.

> I can only have, in the strict sense of the word, something whose existence is, up to a certain point, independent of me .....I only have what I can in some manner and within certain limits dispose of. We can only transmit what we have.[1]

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 155.

> We can only express ourselves in terms of having when we are moving on a level where, in whatever manner and whatever degree of transposition, the contrast between within and without retains a meaning.[1]

> The characteristic of a possession is being shewable. There is a strict parallel between having drawings by X in one's portfolio which can be shown to this or that visitor, and having ideas or opinions on this or that question.[2]

> It seems: that this order is manifested to our thought as essentially involving the reference to another qua other.[3]

> The order of having is the order of predication or the characterizable.[4]

A simple example, such as owning a house, will suffice in the application of these criteria. But the prototype of all having is the "myself." Having is most clearly experienced by the "I" rather than the "he." Let us then modify the example to: I own a house. Now, the house is independent of the "I" prior to possession. However, consequent upon possession, the house, which prior to being owned was not of the "I," is now added to the circle of the "I's" selfhood and enters into a relationship with it. The "I," by the fact of possession, has now the power of disposition which includes transmittibility. In short, "I," the possessor, can now, if the "I" wishes, dispose of the house. The house can be regarded as a quid which is external to the qui or the "I". And yet by the relationship of possession which is seemingly within the "I," the house, although in reality external to the "I," is somehow within the "I." The house, as possessed, certainly is showable to others. In addition, since the house is an object and is therefore within the

---

[1] Ibid., p. 160. [2] Ibid., p. 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 161. [4] Ibid., p. 151.

order of characterization, the "I's" ideas and opinions about the house are also in the order of possession, or, more exactly, having.

Having is most clear cut when the possessed is an object which in reality is distinct and separate from us. But what of our ideas? Do we possess them? Marcel answers affirmatively.

> Having-as-possession can itself develop varieties that are very different, and arranged, as it were, in a hierarchy. But the possessive index is as clearly marked when I say, "I have a bicycle," as when I assert, "I have my own views on that," Or even when I say (and this takes us in a slightly different direction), "I have time to do so and so.[1]

> I note that there is a strict parallel between having in one's portfolio drawings by X which one might show to a visitor, and having ideas on this or that subject which one will put forward on occasion. What one has is really by definition something one can show.[2]

> Knowledge as a mode of having is essentially communicable.[3]

The showability of ideas and their communicability are, in final analysis, identical. In a very true sense, to show one's ideas is to communicate them, and to communicate them is to show them. But showability which includes communication, as a specific, is essentially related to disposability. In other words, showability and communicability are modes of disposability. This being so, and if at the same time disposability is of the essence of possession, then we can conclude with Marcel that we have, as possessions, our ideas.

But can we possess being? Marcel's response would be a resounding denial of the possibility of so doing. The reasons for his denial are not difficult

---

[1] Ibid., p. 158. [2] Ibid., p. 134.

[3] Ibid., p. 145.

to find. First, possession by ownership and possession by characterization amount to having objects. Having is situated in the realm of the problematic. But being is a mystery. As such, it is not external to the possessor, or, more exactly, the alleged possessor. In fact, as Marcel emphasizes, a possessor of being is an absurd fiction, because this would entail his standing outside of being. But being is not external to an alleged possessor. He is inescapably involved in being. In other words, being is not a quid that is independent of a qui, and because of this the distinction between within and without, so vital to true having, loses all meaning. Further, according to Marcel, being, whether it be that of an individual, of God, or of reality in general, is not characterizable and therefore cannot be possessed.

Marcel holds that there is an intimate relationship between having and desire. Desire, as he sees it, is a form of having without having. The gnawing that tears at the individual is in direct proportion to his desire - his having without having. Desire which is consumated gives rise to fear - the fear that what is possessed will be torn from the possessor, that it will be lost, or that it will be irreparably damaged. The twin offspring of having - desire and fear - dominate the world of the problematic which is that of function and technics, and because of them the individual is lost in and consumed by his possessions. If desire centers on the possessor, desire is auto-centric. However, it can masquarade under the specious cloak of hetero-centricity if the attention of the desiring individual centers on the other not qua subject but qua other. The deceptiveness of heterocentric desire consists in concentrating on the other as object and not as subject, as a "him" rather that a "thou."

Being can never be sought as that which is desired because being transcends that which desire seeks - the object. But does not the exigence of being imply that being can be attained? How can the individual experience an exigence for that which cannot be possessed? How can unpossessible being be approached? Marcel answers that it is done through love which rises above the auto-centricity and specious hetero-centricity of desire.

Existence and Being

Marcel, for whom the relation between being and existence has long been a preoccupation and a worry, says:

> When I recognize, when I salute the existence of anything, I recognize at the same time that before a day has gone it will no longer exist in the sense that I shall no longer exist myself bodily. We can see this most clearly when we consider things which are bound up with human life: the house in which such and such a person was born no longer exists, it was pulled down at such and such a date, nothing remains in its place but elements that have been scattered to infinity, nothing but a handful of dust.[1]

The central criterion to which all judgements of existence must be referred is the body, not just as being corporal, but as "my body." In using the term "my body," Marcel is referring to the incarnate condition of man. To put it another way, he is saying that the self (it is felt that he means the soul) is rooted in the flesh and indivisibly united to it. It is as incarnate that the self is inserted into existence, and it is through the body, insofar as it is his body, that the self comes into contact with reality. The existential indubitable is the self as incarnate, and the awareness of existence is an awareness of an immediacy of the "I" with the "exist" such that there is no chink into which doubt can insert itself. There is thus an

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 28.

ontological identity of the incarnate self and its existence such that there can be no doubt of the self's existence. Not only is the incarnate self aware of its own existence but it is also aware of the existence of other incarnate selves. This indubitable awareness of the self and other selves as existing is the foundation of what Troisfontaines refers to as community. For Marcel, esse est co-esse, to be is to be with. The body as "my body" or the body of the self comes into contact with physical reality through feeling as a mode of participation. If the participatory mode of feeling were denied to the self's body, then the self would be cut off from contact with all other existence except its own. In any event, Marcel ascribes a central position to "my body" precisely because through it physical existence is attained. This is similar to the position that nothing is in the intellect which is not prior in the senses.

According to Marcel, the body, as the body of the self, is endowed with a density that is lived or felt; when the person brings other things before it, he endows them with a density analogous to his felt density. The reason for this being that the existent is a thing and yet more than a thing. Such would be the case with one's own body or other peoples' bodies. Insofar as the body is subject to illness or accident, it can and should be treated like an object. But illness and accident can only happen to a subject which has an interiority of life, a life of its own. Nothing could possibly happen to a thing because it is object and not subject. Hence, Marcel holds that, while it is true to say that the house which has been torn down no longer exists, there is reason to ask if its ever existed. In other words, the house, or any other object brought before the self, has been incorrectly assimilated to the self's

body and is really, on that account, a pseudo-existent. Consequently, to say that the house no longer exists is meaningless because it never existed in the true sense of the word in the first place. What Marcel seems to be leading up to is that existence seems to him to be indistinguishable from authentic being.

The identity of existence and authentic being becomes clearer if it is related to ontological exigence. Marcel points to the emptiness of the functionalized world and the inner dissatisfaction of the individual which ensues from it. It is the experience of emptiness and aridity that makes manifest the demand for being. But since to be is to be with, the demand for being must not and, if it is to remain a true demand, cannot be auto-centric. The foundation for the satisfaction of this demand can only be found in inter-subjectivity, which is but to say that it can only be found in love. Now being cannot be separated from value because to demand that which is without value is tantamount to an absurdity. Ontological exigence is satisfied in a certain fullness of truth which Marcel identifies with value. The exigence of being is a protest against the Pessimism which proclaims that nothing is, that there is nothing that can withstand the corrosive analysis which negates existential value. The satisfaction of that demand is found in fulfillment which is being. Without love there can be no fulfillment. Without inter-subjectivity the demand for being can never be satisfied.

How is ontological exigence related to the identity of existence with authentic being? Marcel provides the answer.

> The fact, however, that being cannot be separated from the exigence of being, must never be lost sight of. Therein lies the fundamental reason for the impossibility of severing being from value. Looking at it from this point of view we see that the problem round which our recent enquiries have revolved lies in finding the answer whether the exigence of perennialness is or is

> not involved in the exigence of being, or whether on the contrary the two exigencies can be separated from one another. Our analysis of the problem of existing and ceasing to exist has, in fact, led us to recognise that the bond between the two cannot be broken. "To say that one loves a being," says one of *my* characters, "means, thou, at least thou shall not die."[1]

How does Marcel define perenniality or, which amounts to the same thing, immortality? He defines it in terms of love.

> For my part, I should be inclined to give a negative definition of perenniality: the real meaning of "to say that one loves a being is to say thou, at least, thou shalt not die" is rather "because I love you, because I affirm you as being, there is something in you which can bridge the abyss that I vaguely call Death."[2]

Love is not autocentric or subjective; it is heterocentric and inter-subjective. When the affirmation of being becomes love, this affirmation resigns in favor of the affirmed; this constitutes the refusal of love to become subjective.

There is no doubt that Marcel would agree without reservation that the incarnate person is a being and that Ens Realissimum is a being. But he would stoutly maintain that neither of these is a quid or that which can be garnished with a given number of predicates. In short, neither is capable of being reduced to object about which objective affirmations can be made.

> Without using the words necessarily in the scholastic sense, we may now say that the object of our enquiry is being par excellence; but we must also admit that, inasmuch as it is being, this being refuses to allow itself to be posited as object, as a quid, as something that can be garnished with a given number of predicates.[3]

> We have reached a point where the question that should concern us lies in knowing whether there is any way in which I can have experience of myself as being - being in a sense which is not that in which

---

[1] Ibid., p. 68.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 57.

> I grasp myself as existing. When the question is first asked, it seems indeed an obscure one. A little light is thrown on it if only we stress the actual etymology of the word "to exist": if we emphasize, that is, that to exist is to emerge, to arise. But it is clear that if I can somehow rise up so that I can become more readily perceived by others, so also I can withdraw into my own inner being. That, in fact, is what happens as soon as I am in a state of recollection. This act appears to be bound up with the foreknowledge of a reality which is mine, or perhaps, more exactly, gives me a foundation on which, in as much as I am myself, I can stand: the movement of turning toward this reality helps me to approach it, but it can never enable me fully to coincide with it. If it is true that I can in a certain sense take hold of my existence, my being, on the other hand, cannot be the an object of my affirmations.....What Du Bos here calls the soul, is in reality my being: conversely, it must be apparent that the being which we are now trying to close in on can only be qualified as my soul.[1]

It would appear that Marcel has given his particular description of what "to exist" means. It is quite different from the Thomistic understanding of what it signifies. Maritain makes reference to this in a footnote in Existence and The Existent.

> When phenomenology elected gratuitously to recast concepts according to its method, the result, as concerns the existentialist phenomenologists, was to void the infinitive to exist of its natural content. As Michael Sora rightly observed (Du dialogue interieur, Paris, 1947, p. 30), ex-sistere does not mean "to stand outside oneself" but "to stand outside of one's causes" or "outside nothingness," to emerge from the night of non-being, or from that of mere possibility, or that of potency.[2]

While it is true that Marcel does not say that to exist means to stand outside oneself, nevertheless, Maritain's criticism would still apply. Marcel's interpretation, as has been stated, is that ex-sistere means emerge so as to become more readily perceived by others; and conversely, if one can rise up, so also can one withdraw into one's inner being. Thus it would seem that for

---

[1] Ibid., p. 35.

[2] Maritain, Existence and the Existent, p. 22.

him existence has a double thrust; rising up and withdrawal. Existence as emergence or rising up makes one manifest to others; existence as withdrawal into our inner being is what makes apparent the non-coincidence of our existence with our being.

> As I wrote a few years ago in my Diary (1934): "When I say not that I am but that I exist.....I glimpse more or less obscurely the fact that my being is not only present to my own awareness but that it is a manifest being. It might be better, indeed, instead of saying, "I exist," to say, "I am manifest." The Latin prefix ex- meaning out, outwards, out from - in exist has the greatest importance. I exist - that is as much as to say: I have something to make myself known and recognized by others and by myself, even if I wear borrowed plumes.[1]

As one ponders over Marcel's position on existence, it seems that he has restricted existence to being and that objects have only a pseudo-existence. In restricting existence to being, the being he has in mind is incarnate being. For Marcel, God does not exist, He simply is. Now the reason for limiting existence to incarnate beings would appear to be that only they have an interior life, the possession of which enables them to meet the double aspect of true existence - emergence as a manifestive rising up and withdrawal in recollection into inner being. As incarnate beings they can be perceived by others, and having an interior life, they can withdraw into their inner being. Objects, because they possess no interior life are incapable of withdrawal, and if they cannot withdraw, neither can they emerge. The existence of objects is a pseudo-existence.

What, then, does being, considered in opposition to existence mean to Marcel? On the basis of what has just been said, the meaning of being is that

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, I, pp. 111-112.

it is that within the "I," as subject, about which the "I" can make no affirmations and on which the "I" can get no grip. Existence, on the other hand, is that which the "I" can affirm as a manifest being, manifest, that is, to himself and others. By extension, the truth of this applies to all incarnate beings.

In considering Marcel's doctrine on being and existence, there is a question which is constantly thrusting itself forward. The question is this: is not what Marcel calls being really essence? It would seem that it is. When the self, that existential indubitable, asks, "Who am I" is this not tantamount to asking, "What is the essence of my singular being?" or "What is it that makes my being to be my being." Between essence and existence non datur tertium. Hence when Marcel declares that existence can be affirmed but not being, what he must necessarily mean is being, in the sense of essence, cannot be affirmed in terms of objective knowledge. There seems to be no other way of explaining it. The basic reason why Marcel refuses to allow an objective affirmation of the essence of an incarnate subject is that an affirmation of that sort would reduce him to object and return him to the world of the problematic.

My Life and My Being

Marcel leaves no room for doubting that one's life is not one's being.

> It is doubtless a metaphysical falsity to say, "I am my life."[1]

> We can find no salvation for mind or soul unless we see the difference between our being and our life. The distinction may be in some ways a mysterious one, but the mystery itself is a source of life. To say "my being is not identical with my life" is to say two different things. First, that since I am not my life, my life must have been given to me; in a sense unfathomable to man, I am previous to it. I am comes before I live. Second, my being is

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 71.

> something which is in jeopardy from the moment my life begins, and must be saved; my being is at stake, and therein perhaps lies the whole meaning of life. And from this second point of view, I am not before but beyond my life.[1]
>
> I am not my life.[2]

From the context of the second quotation it is clear that the life to which he is referring is the life of the incarnate individual. This should be related to his earlier position that "my being" is "my soul." Therefore, when Marcel declares, "I am comes before I live," what he is in effect saying is that my soul is previous to my life as an incarnate individual. But even with this interpretation, Marcel's statement is still vague. Its vagueness lies in the failure of Marcel to explain in what way and on what basis one's being is previous to one's life. Perhaps his failure to do so is inherent in the phenomenological method which he has adopted. In any event, it seems that the only way to remove the vagueness of his statement is to resort to the distinction of priority in time and priority in nature. Certainly, Marcel would not agree that that soul is prior in time to incarnate life. To hold that the soul is temporally previous to life is an absurdity; in that case, essence would be before it exists. On the other hand, it would seem reasonable that he would agree that the soul is prior in nature to life. If the soul is understood to be that from which life flows, which is as much as to say that the soul is the principle of life or immanent action, it becomes clear that the priority of soul to life is the priority of substance to its action. Such priority is not one of time but of nature. In all likelihood, Marcel would be

---

[1] Ibid., p. 196.

[2] Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 13.

somewhat repelled by such a thoroughly objective explanation but he has hinted at it.

> If we separated life from the soul, we should inevitably tend to turn it into essence, and this would be a subtle way of betraying it.[1]

What he seems to be saying here is that to remove life from the soul would be to reduce it to a state of possibility in which are found unactualized essences. This is pretty close to the Thomistic position that an existent essence must exercise its existences if it is to continue in existence; which is precisely what subsitent beings do. The soul, as principium vitae, exercises its existence through its subsistence, and the only priority which the soul has in relation to the incarnate life of a subsistent person is that of principle to action.

Marcel's assertion that one's being is beyond one's life is more easily understood when it is related to the necessity of saving it from the jeopardy in which incarnate life places it. In other words, salvation makes manifest that one's being or soul is beyond incarnate life. What Marcel seems to be affirming, without really saying it in so many words, is the immortality of the soul. This becomes even more apparent when considered in terms of Marcel's assertion that the exigence of being is the exigence of God and demands perenniality - aeternity for God and immortality for the soul. Hence, our being is beyond our life in the sense that our lives as incarnate are transitory and our souls immortal.

Marcel emphasizes the distinction between one's being and one's life from another point of view, namely, the fact that a person can more or less evaluate

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 95.

his life. Not only can he condemn it by an abstract verdict, but he can put an effective term to it by suicide which, in the last analysis, is the ultimate and irrevocable manifestation of despair and a confirmation that the soul is what Marcel calls "the ontological hazard. The act of suicide is just what the term implies - putting and end to one's life. But what of the soul? Marcel would respond that in suicide the soul suffers a loss of being. Loss on the level of being is perdition. In other words, the soul, being immortal, perdures, but does so in a state of being cut off from being because his suicide is the ultimate denial of being. By suicide incarnate life is destroyed but not that being which is the soul.

CHAPTER VI

THE CONCRETE APPROACHES TO BEING

In the last chapter, the possibility of suicide was pointed out as a reason why "my being" is not "my life." But Marcel also maintains that the possibility not only of suicide but also of despair and betrayal is an essential reference point for all metaphysical thought.

> The fact that suicide is possible is in this sense an essential reference point for all genuine metaphysical thought. And not only suicide: despair in all its forms, betrayal in all its aspects insofar as they appear to us as active denials of being, and insofar as the soul which despairs shuts itself up against the central and mysterious assurance in which we believe we have found the principle of all positivity.
>
> It is not enough to say that we live in a world where betrayal is possible at every moment, in every degree, and in every form. It seems that the very constitution of our world recommends, if it does not force us, to betrayal..... But it seems that at the same time, and correlatively, it is of the essence of despair, of betrayal, and even death itself, that they can be refused and denied.....
>
> If this is so, the concrete approaches to the ontological mystery should not be found in the scale of logical thought which gives rise to a prior question. They should rather be sought in the elucidation of certain data which are spiritual in their own right, such as fidelity, hope, and love where we see man at grips with the temptations of denial, introversion, and hard-heartedness.[1]

To be told that the possibility of suicide, despair, and betrayal is an essential reference point for all authentic metaphysical thinking, that betrayal and despair, along with suicide, are not only real possibilities, but they also seem to be recommended by the very structure of the world in

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 119.

which we live, hits one with an emotional impact which, when first reflected upon, is irritating and frustrating. What place do they have in metaphysics? By what right does Marcel even mention them? These are questions that quite naturally arise as reactions to the emotional shock resulting from these assertions. However, it must be remembered that Marcel has a very definite purpose in mind when he mentions them in the particular context he has chosen. The fact that they are real possibilities is not only necessary but inevitable in metaphysics as Marcel conceives it. His is a metaphysics not of demonstration but of appeal. Appeal to whom? To the individual person who has been endowed with freedom of choice. Freedom is inextricably bound up with the whole of his metaphysics. A confirmation of this is implicit in the quotation cited above. When Marcel states that suicide, betrayal, and despair are starkly real possibilities, he follows this up with the assertion that they can be denied. Their denial can be only that of a being who has the inner power of choice. Now, if the denial of suicide, betrayal, and despair is an act of freedom, so also is their acceptance. The person who faces the emptiness and aridity of the world of technics and is overwhelmed by the pessimistic conviction that nothing is, is not determined, in the final analysis, to a course of suicide, betrayal, and despair. Indeed, the world whose habitus is increasingly that of technics may recommend them by its very absurdity, but the final decision rests with the person. Whether he embraces suicide, despair, and betrayal is his, and only his, freely made decision. If this were not true, Marcel's philosophy would be an appeal to the impossible. As has been said again and again, his metaphysics is an appeal to the individual who is caught in the existential quagmire of the problematical world to reject

suicide, to refuse betrayal, to deny despair, and to participate in being through a freely posited embrace of fidelity, hope, and love. And this appeal can be made only to a person who, ex natura, has freedom of choice. The freedom of the individual makes possible the metaphysics of Marcel.

As it is with suicide, betrayal, and despair, so also is it with faith, hope, and love. They too not only can be rejected, but once freely chosen, they may still be freely denied. The man of hope can become the man of despair; the man of faith can become the man of betrayal; the man of love can become the man of hate. The possibility of a denial of the freely placed acceptance of faith, hope, and love underlies the whole of Marcel's metaphysics. The ascent to being is made along the perilous road of freedom. Where we see man at grips with the temptations to denial is in faith, hope, and love.

In order to grasp what Marcel means by concrete approaches to being, certain aspects of his thought must be kept in mind. First, metaphysical thought is possible only for a person who, in a state of recollection, reflects on the ontological import of his experiences. Second, the person as an existential indubitable is possessed of a blinded intuition or assurance of being. This becomes manifest in a deeply experienced dissatisfaction described by Marcel as the need for transcendence or the exigence of being which, in final analysis, is the inner demand for God. Third, the individual not only exists but exists with; he is part of the community of man. Fourth, the singularity of the person, while not patient of objective characterisation any more than is being, must never be neglected. Fifth,God in His omnipresence is not only present everywhere outside us but also within us. In other words,

the Transcendent is not only transcendent but it is also immanent within us. These facets of Marcellian thought can now provide the bases for a question, the answer to which will provide a clearer understanding of what is meant by concrete approaches. How can the indubitably existential and singular being, one among others in a community, possessed of the assurance of being and driven by the exigence of God, and incapable of objective affirmations about either his being or any other being (including God) approach the citadel of being in such wise that his singularity and the singularity of others will not be neglected and his exigence for being will be satisfied in joy and fulfillment. Rejecting the avenue of abstraction as demudative of personal singularity, Marcel would respond that the acess to being is found in the concrete approaches of love, faith, and hope which render the singularity of the believing, loving, and hopeful person more transparent to himself not through knowledge by mode of conceptualization but by mode of what they are - faith, love, and hope; only these approaches will elevate persons from a community in communication to a community in communion. But Marcel would remind us that these approaches to being are paths to be cut through a world which suppresses being; are paths that are winding, tortuous, and exposed to the dangers of suicide, betrayal, and despair; are paths the cutting of which can be halted at any moment by the rejection of a freely posited embrace of faith, hope, and love.

According to Marcel, faith, hope, and love are inseparable.

> The most important of these possibilities consists, I think, in asserting philosophically (that is to say short of any theological

specification) the indissolubility of hope, faith, and charity.[1] Implicit in this assertion is that the interrelations of faith, hope and love are such that a diminution or increase in one results in a corresponding diminution or increase in the other two. To say that one loves without faith is a lie. To say that one loves without hope is an absurdity. An absence or lessening of love is also an absence or lessening of faith and hope.

Not only must it be borne in mind that love, faith, and hope constitute an indissoluble union, but also that an analysis is really a splitting of their inseparable unity. While analysis is legitimate for purposes of understanding, it must be emphasized that what is dissolved by analysis is ontologically a unity, or, as in this instance, the indissolubility of faith, hope, and love as lived expressions of the singular person. Faith, hope, and love are mysteries. This is so because as lived expressions of a singular person who is himself intrinsically involved in the mystery of being they are no more capable of objective characterization than is the being of whom they are the expressions, and expressions as affirming being.

Inextricably linked with his position on the concrete approaches to being is Marcel's view of the person. According to him, the person creates himself as a person. How can this be? How can an already existent person create himself as person? Of course, there can be no doubt that the subject, for Marcel, is an indivisible unity of body and soul. In that sense, his position is analogous to the Thomistic concept of the rational suppositi. Nevertheless, what does Maacel mean when he says, in effect, that the person, as an already

---

[1] Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 191.

existent and indivisible unity of body and soul, creates himself as a person? What Gallagher has to say may be of service.

> More pertinent for us, however, are the words of Royce who, here as elsewhere, is doubtless the original source of Marcel's thought. The person, declares Royce, is an ethical category; there is only a person inasmuch as there is acceptance of a certain task assigned to us by the Absolute: you know that you are a self precisely insofar as you intend to accomplish God's will by becoming one.[1]

Thus, it seems logical to infer that Marcel, when referring to the creation of the person by the person, is adverting to actualising what is potentially within the person. The subsistent subject creates his person as an ethical category when he brings forth within himself those abiding ontological and mysterious realities of love, faith, and hope which are demanded of us, as imagines Dei, by God Himself present within him. The creation of ourselves as persons cannot be accomplished within the narrow confines of ego-centrism because self-centeredness is a denial of the true nature of faith, hope, and love. To love is to love someone other than oneself; to have faith is to believe in someone other than oneself; to hope is to hope in someone other than oneself. It is only by going beyond the borders of ego-centrism and entering into communion with others in love, faith, and hope that we engage in the creative act of bringing forth our true person. In the participation of loving, believing, and hoping we come to a knowledge of ourselves in our singularity.

Love

That love is central to the metaphysics of Marcel is beyond doubt.

> It is true that I have seldom used the word "charity" in my

---

[1]Kenneth Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), p. 71.

> earlier lectures. But we cannot fail to see that intersubjectivity, which it is increasingly more evident is the cornerstone of a concrete ontology, is after all nothing but charity itself.[1]

But while central, love escapes definition because it is intrinsically involved in the mystery of being. Love, while not subjective, is certainly not non-objective; it is inter-subjective. When Marcel declares love to be inter-subjectivity, what he is asserting is that love can only be the self-donation of an "I" to a "thou." In other words, when a person loves another person, the "I" of the lover cannot love the beloved as a "him." According to Marcel, if this were true, then the lover would love an object, and his love would really be a desire for something that can be characterized and manipulated. Love can occur only between an "I" and a "thou."

Inextricably linked with intersubjectivity are presence and availability. Perhaps an example will clarify this. A young man who is deeply upset at the death of his mother is flying home for her funeral. He is seated next to a army captain who is not much older than himself. To pass the time, the young man begins a conversation with his fellow passenger. As they talk, he has the feeling that the captain is not really with him, that he is not really present to him. He feels that to this captain he is an absent third, a "him." As the conversation, or, more exactly, this communication without presence continues, the captain's relationship with the young man suddenly changes. He discovers that the young man had not only served in Viet Nam but also had been in a particularly savage fire fight in which he himself had taken part. The young man now feels that the captain is really with him, that for the captain he is

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 191.

now a thou. The shared intimacy of battle renders the captain present to him, and both he and the captain have transcended the ego-centricity of non-presence and have entered into a relationship in which the being of each is not only external to but is also within the other in the co-presence that is a welcoming. The presence of the captain is manifested in his availability to the young man in terms of his sympathy, empathy, and condolence. However, this example lingers on the threshold of intersubjectivity. It is in friendship that presence and availability are clearly evident. A word of caution seems necessary. Presence is not evident in the sense that it can be grasped in a concept; the evidence of presence shadows forth in such things as a smile or the warmth of a greeting. Presence can only be glimpsed. Availability is the translation of disponsibilite. Marcel would have preferred the term handiness in the sense that the disponsible person has his resources at hand. It would seem that presence is manifest in availability. To return to friendship. The intersubjectivity or love that is friendship is evinced in the friend's presence made manifest by his availability or, if it is preferred, handiness. His resources are available not only in times of joy and happiness but also, and much more importantly, in times of need, trouble, and sadness. The true friend makes a gift of himself. And in the giving, he is not concerned with himself or what he gains for himself in giving himself to his friend. His self interest is obliterated in the altruism of giving himself to a thou whom he loves not as that which can be objectised but as a thou whose being is beyond judgment.

It would seem that the difference between presence and availability amounts to a difference without a distinction. The person of presence is the

disponsible person; the disponsible person is the person of presence. And love is the intersubjectivity that is presence and availability. Love can find no foothold in the world of the object or the "him"; love can only be between an "I" and a "thou." Hence, the lover can make no judgment on the "thou" or beloved. Of course, the lover is also a thinking subject. But if he judges the beloved, he thereby reduces the beloved to an object.

> Love bears on what is beyond essence.....love extends beyond any possible judgment.....Inasmuch as he loves (that is, inasmuch as he converts the object into a subject he must absolutely forgo making a judgment.[1]

When Marcel states that love creates the self, what he means is that the lover creates the loving self. Loving creates the lover because real love is loved love. It is in this sense that the creativity of love is to be understood. Love is the basis which creates the loving "I." It is the "thou" which, in communion, founds the "I" as lover. In fact, for Marcel, love, as the intersubjective act of self-donation, creates a community in transcendent freedom. In love is found the fulfillment of being.

But how does love at the human level attain to the "I's" love of God? In other words, how do we rise from the love of the finite to the love of the infinite? For the answer to that question we have to fall back upon the exigence of being which, for Marcel, is ultimately the exigence of God. Now, God is not a "him"; he cannot be characterized by judgment as can an object. God is an "Absolute Thou" whose entire creation, including us, is a gift, and a gift which is one of love because God, the "Absolute Thou," is a loving God.

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 64.

According to Marcel, God, as the "Absolute Loving Thou," is the God for whom we have an exigence. Implicit in the exigence of a loving, creative, and absolute "Thou" is that such a being brought forth, ex nihilo sui et subjecti, creatures in whose being love is primary, or, more exactly, creatures made to love. Just as God has given us the loving gift of ourselves to ourselves, we can do no less at the finite level by making a donation, as unconditional as possible, of our being to another being in the intersubjectivity which is love. In loving our fellow man in the "I-thou" relationship of intersubjectivity we manifest our love and extend it, as it were, to the "Absolute Thou" who created us. It is in loving that I create myself not only as lover of finite "thou's" but also as lover of the "Absolute Thou."

God is the "Absolute Thou" who can never become a "him."[1]

> I can only think of myself as participating in God insofar as I have faith in Him.[2]
>
> But does love involve the affirmation of a closed, exhaustible content? On the contrary - it bears on the infinite.....When I talk with someone for whom I experience nothing resembling love, he appears to me as capable of furnishing me with a certain set of answers (what is his name, when and where was he born, etc.) He himself, if you like, is a filled up questionnaire. The more I love a being and the more I participate in his life, the less adequate this way of thinking is shown to be. The beloved is beyond all these questions.
>
> From this we can doubtless conclude that to love someone truly is to love him in God.[3]

Love as thought is no longer love. Objectising it destroys it. The

---

[1] Ibid., p. 137.

[2] Ibid., p. 66.

[3] Ibid., p. 158.

knowledge of love is found in loving. The "I" and the "thou" of love are themselves incapable of characterization inasmuch as they are beings. This holds true whether it be the love of a person for another or for God himself. True love is unconditional; such love will be possible for human beings only in eternity. Using Marcel's thought, we might describe love as the uncharacterizable, unconditioned, and intersubjective donation of one's being which itself escapes objective predication to another being who is also beyond objective affirmations. Love is opposed to desire because only the possessible can be desired; being cannot be possessed and hence cannot be desired. Love, in addition to being a donation of being, is also a welcoming of being. And in intersubjectivity the being of both the lover and the beloved enter into a mysterious relationship of interiority; which is to say, an interior interpretation of being.

Faith and Fidelity

Gallagher, in stating that "fidelity" is but a substitution for "faith," affirms that there is really no distinction between them.

> The substitution of "fidelity" for "faith" is a precision, since it removes the suggestion of supernatural dogmatic belief which the earlier expression unnecessarily carried.[1]

Further along, he declares that we do not rise from finite fidelities to Absolute Fidelity but that Faith or Absolute Fidelity makes all other fidelities possible. He incorporates into one of his sentences a phrase from Marcel's Refusal and Invocation. The phrase is as follows:

---

[1]Gallagher, Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, p. 71.

> .....by starting out from that Absolute Fidelity which we can simply call Faith.[1]

While not intended, that phrase could be interpreted as an indirect corroboration of his assertion that there is no distinction between fidelity and faith. This assertion, although seemingly supported by Marcel himself, cannot be accepted. The justification for this rejection is Marcel's position on the relation between faith and fidelity.

In the fifth chapter of the second volume of The Mystery of Being, Marcel discusses what he means by faith. Faith is belief. But belief is an ambiguous term.

> The verb to believe is commonly used in an extremely vague and fluctuating way. It can simply mean "I presume" or "it seems to me." In that context to believe appears as something much weaker and more uncertain than to be convinced. But in our domain, if we wish to reach greater precision of thought, we shall have to concentrate our attention not on the fact of believing that but on that of believing.[2]

Faith, then, is the act of believing in. But believing in what? Marcel replies by asserting that we can believe only in a "thou."

> To believe in someone, on the contrary, to place confidence in him, is to say: "I am sure that you will not betray ("que tu ne trahiras pas") my hope, that you will respond to it, that you will fulfill it." I have purposely used the second person singular - one cannot have confidence except in a "toi," in a reality which is capable of functioning as a "toi," of being invoked, of being something to which one can have recourse.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 86.

[3] Ibid., p. 89.

Accordingly, faith or belief in a "thou" means to have confidence in a "thou." In this context, confidence is really a credit or trust that has been placed in a "thou."

> But as soon as we are concerned with speaking of belief in its proper meaning, we have to get rid of the material ballast, if I may call it such, in this opening of a credit. If I believe in something, it means that I place myself at the disposal of something, or again that I pledge myself fundamentally, and this pledge affects not only what I have but also what I am.[1]

Hence to have faith in someone (a "thou") is to place confidence in him (as a "thou"). a confidence which entails placing oneself at his disposal. This confidence and this disposal is secured by a pledge of what one has and what one is. In short, an essential element of faith in someone is the promise to be faithful to him.

In terms of what has just been said, how is Marcel's phrase," from the Absolute Fidelity which we can simply call Faith," to be interpreted? Certainly, Faith does not refer to God in the sense that He places his confidence in us. It is impossible for God to be the subject of faith. On the contrary, God is the Absolute Thou in whom we place our faith as both confidence and pledge. To put it another way, Faith is not a relation of Creator to creature, but of creature to Creator. If, therefore, God cannot be the subject of Faith, he is not, a fortiori, and cannot be the subject of Absolute Fidelity. This becomes clear if, for the moment, we suppose that God puts his faith in us and secures it with a pledge to be faithful to that confidence with his entire Being. According to the thought of Marcel, God

---

[1] Ibid., p. 87.

would then presuppose an assurance that we will not betray Him. Again according to Marcel, an assurance is a bet, and one that can be lost. We can betray God. Now if betrayal entails a loss of assurance, and if that assurance is in God, then He is subject to change. To say that God is changeable is to utter the impossible. Therefore, Faith and Absolute Fidelity are not to be identified with God.

To return once again to Marcel's phrase: "by setting forth from that Absolute Fidelity which we can simply call Faith." The term simply is significant. If by simply Marcel meant that Absolute Fidelity was just Faith, or if by simply he meant that Absolute Fidelity is no more or no less than Faith, Gallagher would be correct in declaring their identity. But if by simply Marcel meant that Absolute Fidelity's identification with Faith is a way to avoid subtlety, then Gallagher's position is not tenable because it is contrary a citation from Marcel which shows that he held to a distinction between faith and fidelity.

> Indeed, the closeness of the link between faith and attestation becomes fully apparent as soon as we touch upon the intermediary idea of fidelity. There cannot be faith without fidelity. Faith in itself is not a movement of soul, a transport, or a ravishment; it is simply unceasing attestation.[1]

Marcel is there referring to the close connection between faith and witness. Now, what must be kept in mind is "the really important point about witness: its attestation."[2] To give witness is to attest. Faith is

---

[1]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 211.

[2]Ibid., p. 210.

attestation in the sense of giving witness to the "thou" in whom we have placed our pledged confidence. Take the instance of the martyr. He has absolute faith in God. The witness that is his faith is consummated in the freely placed sacrifice of his life. His sacrificing his life is a manifest act of fidelity to the "Absolute Thou" to whom he has bound himself in faith. In the given circumstances of martyrdom, the freely placed binding of himself by a pledge of his being to Him in whom he has placed his trust would be betrayed if the martyr's attestation of his faith did not become manifest by fidelity, evinced and actualized in the sacrifice of his life. In other words, a person facing martyrdom can renege on his binding pledge by refusing to fulfill his commitment to be faithful by the sacrifice of his life. The point is that true faith is unceasing attestation, but the attestation that is faith is mediated by fidelity. In short, true faith as attestation is impossible without fidelity. To use a popular phrase: "If you have faith, put your money where your mouth is." Faith and fidelity, although inseparable, are not thereby identical. Therefore, Gallagher's contention is rejected.

If faith is a pledge by which a person freely binds himself, or more concisely, is a commitment, does the commitment originate solely with the person making it? Marcel answers negatively.

> There is no commitment purely from my own side; it always implies that the other being has a hold over me. All commitment is a response. A one-sided commitment would not only be rash but could be blamed on pride.[1]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 46.

The hold that the other being has lies in the fact that the one who commits himself has placed not only his confidence in that other being but has also placed his being at his disposal and guaranteed it with a pledge. In effect, the believer is saying, "Because I believe in you, be sure that when you need me I will be present." Because of the faith thus placed in the other being, he is appealing to him to be faithful to his promise when he calls upon the one who believes in him. The commitment to fidelity is a response to that appeal.

Commitment that is wholly one-sided is pride. According to Marcel, pride can never be the basis of a commitment for this would devolve into being fidelity to oneself which is a negation of true fidelity.

> As I see it, and despite appearances to the contrary, fidelity is never fidelity to oneself, but is referred to what I called the hold of one being over another.[1]

Not only is fidelity not fidelity to oneself, but the commitment to fidelity is unconditional and therefore cannot depend on what the future holds. In fact, ignorance of the future enhances the worth of a promise.

> In swearing fidelity to a person, I do not know what future awaits us or even, in a sense, what the person will be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise.[2]

As Marcel points out, we do not know what the person to whom fidelity has been pledged will be like in the future or even tomorrow. Despite possible

---

[1] Ibid., p. 46.

[2] Ibid., p. 47.

changes in that person, we still promise to be faithful to him. But what about the person who commits himself to fidelity? Can he commit himself, as presently constituted, to the future? Marcel discusses this question, and what follows summarizes his thinking as set forth in Being and Having. No one can commit himself on the basis of either his present feelings or present desires. To do so is to assume a constancy of desire and feeling which is not within one's power to guarantee. The wild desire to help a friend in need or the ocean of sympathy and concern cannot be guaranteed to be ours tomorrow. The constancy of our feelings and desires is simply something that we cannot vouchsafe. If, as Marcel points out, we subscribe to the position that our ego is constituted by a present state of consciousness, our present ego simply cannot commit to fidelity an ego which will be existent only in the future. If, then, we cannot commit ourselves to future fidelity on these bases, on which is a commitment to the future to be founded? In referring to fidelity on the ontological level, Marcel says:

> It is in fact the recognition - not a theoretical or verbal recognition - of an ontological permanency.[1]

In the context of Marcel's thought, the ontological permanency to which he refers is, at the human level, that being which is the soul of man that transcends time because it is immortal and that makes man to be an image of God. Therefore, commitment to the future is to be founded on the soul because it is a permanency that transcends time by its immortality. Ultimately, the commitment of fidelity to our fellow man must be anchored in an absolute commitment to God.

---

[1]Ibid., p. 120.

> I see it like this. In the end there must be an absolute commitment, entered upon by the whole of myself, or at least by something real in myself and which could not be repudiated without repudiating the whole - and which would be addressed to the whole of Being and made in the presence of that whole. That is Faith.[1]

It would not seem to run counter to Marcel's thinking to say that if there were no God in whose divine reality we could believe and to whom we could make an absolute commitment, then there would be nothing in man in which we could anchor our faith in him and nothing in man to which we could commit ourselves; the ontological permanency which is the soul of man would be as non-existent as would the being who created it. In brief, the ontological basis of belief at the horizontal level of human life is a belief that is, as it were, vertical - a faith in a Transcendent God.

In connection with fidelity as being creative, Marcel writes:

> It is the perpetuation of a witness which could at any moment be wiped out or denied. It is an attestation which is creative as well as perpetual and more creative as the ontological worth of what it attests is more outstanding.[2]

In what sense is fidelity creative? It must be recalled that we are not only capable of commitment to fidelity but also capable of denying it. But if we freely posit that commitment, if we say, "I will be faithful to my promise," then we must honor that promise to fidelity by the very act that is faithfulness itself. If we promise to perform a certain deed, the proof of the pudding lies in the actual performance of that deed, because prior to the performance of the promised deed it is still within our power to renege on it

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 45-46.

[2] Ibid., p. 120.

by the denial constituted by the active refusal to perform as promised. Faith is manifested in fidelity. As it is with love in which loving creates the lover, so also it is with faith in which fidelity creates the person of living and actual faith. Fidelity creates the person of faithful faith, and faith is the faith lived in fidelity. And since, according to Marcel, fidelity is more creative in proportion to the ontological worth of the "thou" in whom we believe, fidelity to God, the "Absolute Thou," creates us in a proportionately higher degree.

Is there a realtion between faith and love? Of this Marcel leaves no doubt. Although his remarks are centered on God, they can by extension be applied to human faith and love.

> And so, side by side with faith we posit love. I have said elsewhere that love is the condition of faith, and in a sense this is true. But it is only one aspect. I believe that in reality love and faith cannot be disassociated. When faith ceases to be love it congeals into objective belief in a power that is conceived more or less physically. And love which is not faith (which does not posit the transcendence of the God that is loved) is only sort of an abstract game. Just as the divine reality corresponds to faith (the former can only be thought in function of the latter) so divine perfection corresponds to love. And the unity of reality and perfection in God, far from needing to be understood in the old intellectualist sense (ens realissimum) can only be grasped in function of faith and of the union of faith and love that I have just emphasized. I cease to believe in God the moment I cease to love; an imperfect God cannot be real.[1]

Hope.

To hope without love and without faith is not to hope but to despair. Indissolubly linked with faith and love, hope becomes an impossibility when

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 58.

they are not present. According to Marcel, as was previously stated, the absence of any one of these (faith, love, or hope) results in the absence of the other two. Hence, if either faith or love is not present, hope is not present.

> This is what determines the ontological position of hope - absolute hope, inseparable from a faith which is likewise absolute, transcending all laying down of conditions and for this reason every kind of representation whatever it might be. The only possible source from which this absolute hope springs must once more be stressed. It as a response of a creature to the finite Being to whom it is conscious of owing everything that it has and upon whom it cannot impose any conditions whatsoever without scandal. From the moment I abase myself in some sense before the absolute thou who in his infinite condescension has brought me forth out of nothingness it seems as though I forbid myself to despair, or, more exactly, that I implicitly accept the possibility of despair as an indication of treason, so that I could not give way to it without pronouncing my own condemnation.[1]

> Once again we are led to draw attention to the indissoluble connection which binds together hope and love.[2]

> To love anybody is to expect something from him, something which can neither be defined nor foreseen; it is at the same time in some way to make it possible for him to fulfill this expectation. Yes, paradoxical as it may seem, to expect is in some way to give; but the opposite is none the less true; no longer to expect is to strike with sterility the being from whom no more is expected, it is then in some way to deprive him or to take from him in advance what is surely a certain possibility of inventing or creating. Everything looks as though we can only speak of hope where the interaction exists between him who gives and him who receives, where there is that exchange which is the mark of all spiritual life.[3]

Since love of God and faith in God are the bases of all faith and love which

---

[1]Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 46-47.

[2]Ibid., p. 66.

[3]Ibid., p. 49-50.

human beings have for each other, then it is true to say that we love and have faith in our fellow creatures in God. Marcel's whose excursus on hope is founded on this, and it must be kept constantly in mind during an exposition of his doctrine on hope.

Hope is a response to a situation. But not every situation calls for its expression. The situation that evokes the act of hope is one that possesses the characteristics of a trial or captivity, e.g., sickness or exile. Hope then is the response to a situation of trial from which liberation is sought. Hope is directed toward salvation.

> It is obviously impossible in such cases to separate the "I hope" from a certain situation of which it is really a part. Hope is situated in the framework of a trial, not only corresponding to it, but constituting our being's veritable response.[1]

According to Marcel, being situated in a trial does not mean that acting is a relatively free manner is no longer possible, but rather that it is impossible to rise to a certain fullness of life which should be ours. For example, the invalid hopes for a recovery that will liberate him from the capativity of his illness so that he might rise to a fullness of life which would be his if his health were restored. But to restrict hope to being a response to a situation e.g., the response of the invalid to his illness, could lead to an anguish from which there may be no escape. To hope is not merely to respond to a situation, it is also to hope in a "thou." If the invalid were merely responding to a situation, his hoping that he will recover is but the expression of a desire.

---

[1] Ibid., p. 30.

Marcel draws a distinction between "I hope" and "I hope that." "To hope that" is the same as to desire or to wish; the opposite of "hoping that" is "fearing that." Now, as was just mentioned, when the invalid hopes that he will recover, what he is really doing is expressing his desire for health. Accompanying every desire is fear. In the instance of the invalid, his fear is that he will not recover. Hence, in hoping that he will be cured, no matter how strong it may be, he is always pitting his desire against his fear. A further consequence of his hoping, as constitutive of a desire, is that he is firmly entrenched in the world of technics.

> But it is now possible to appreciate the distinction in tone between "I hope....," the absolute statement, and "I hope that ....." This distinction runs clearly parallel to that which obtains in all religious philosophy and which opposes "I believe" to "I believe that."[1]
>
> We might say that hope only escapes a particular metaphysical ruling on condition that it transcends desire - that is to say, that it does not remain centered on the subject himself.[2]
>
> A world where techniques are paramount is a world given over to desire and fear; because every technique is there to serve some desire or fear.[3]

Let us add to the example of the invalid and say that he is incurable. What techniques can cure this man? What medical techniques can fulfill his desire and assuage his fear? The answer is that there are none. The upshot of the whole situation is that his unsatisfied desire and realized fear could change to despair. Hence, "to hope that" is to desire; to desire, which is an act

---

[1] Ibid., p. 32.

[2] Ibid., p. 66.

[3] Marcel, Being and Having, p. 76.

enveloped in ego-centricity, is always to desire an object. As we shall see later, to hope is to hope in a "thou."

Let us assume that this incurable invalid loves and has faith in both God and his fellow creatures, particularly his family, friends, and acquaintances. In addition, he knows he is incurable and accepts the fact. How, then is it possible for him to hope with a hope that is not desire? The answer, according to Marcel, is only when the possibility of despair exists.

> The truth is that there can strictly speaking be no hope except when the possibility to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome.[1]

Implicit in this statement is the affirmation that the opposite of hope is not fear. Fear is the opposite of desire. Since hope is not desire, its opposite is despair. Conversely, it can also be said that there can be no despair except when the possibility of hope exists. Hence, what Marcel is declaring is that in a situation of trial a free choice can be made between hope or despair. Hence, the invalid's freely posited response to his situation can be either hope or despair.

Hope can only be a victory over despair when linked with faith and love which themselves are freely embraced. As was said earlier, the invalid loves and has faith in God and his fellow men. He therefore initially chooses to hope. But his invalidism presses down on him like a crown of thorns; his love, faith and hope begin to slip away until finally they are no more. Seeing no end to his sickness, he engulfs himself in self-pity and in the anguish of interminability. He capitulates before his fate rendered by a

---

[1]Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 36.

judgment that is echoed by the words Besme in Claudel's play, La Ville, and which Marcel himself quotes.

> Nothing is...
> Listen: I shall repeat the word I have said
> Nothing is.
> I have seen and I have touched
> The horror of uselessness. I have added the
> Proof of my hands to that which is not.
> That Nothing does not lack the power to an-
> nounce itself by a mouth which can say:
> I am.
> This is my prey, this I have disclosed.[1]

For the invalid, then, there is nothing that can resist the dissolution wrought by his experience; nothing in reality that is of value; nothing in which he can believe; nothing which he can love; nothing in which he can hope. Under this judgement, he succumbs to despair. But what does it mean to despair? Marcel would say that it is capitulation, which is to say, surrender.

> It seems as though it were always capitulation before a certain fatum laid down by our judgment.[2]

> To capitulate, in the strongest sense of the word, is not only, perhaps is not at all, to accept the given sentence or even to recognise the inevitable as such, it is to go to pieces under this sentence, to disarm before the inevitable.[3]

Devoid of the intersubjectivity that is love, lacking in faith, and without hope, the invalid carries his despair into the core of his ego-centricity which is the domicile of non-availability. And from the keep of his ego-centrism he gazes at interminable tomorrows and in them can see no anticipation

---

[1]Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 65.

[2]Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 37.

[3]Ibid., p. 37.

no expectation that will give him surcease from his freely embraced despair which grows deeper as his life and time itself slips away.

The point to be made is that love and faith which can be freely accepted or rejected is able to guarentee hope, which itself may be freely accepted or rejected, on the condition that their free acceptance successfully resists the assault of rejection. In this context, hope, as freely chosen, is inevitably consequent upon the free positing of faith and love. Thus, hope is inseparably joined to love and faith.

To return once again to the invalid. Let us presume that his love and faith have conquered the temptation to despair and he opts for hope. His hope is not a "hope that" which is the same as desire; rather, it is a "hope in." The object of his hope is the Absolute Thou whom he loves and in whom he believes. His hope in God, the Absolute Thou, is an assurance interior to him, an assurance "that however black things may seem, my present intolerable situation is not final; there must be some way out."[1] It is always concerned "with the restoration of a certain living order in its integrity," and "carries with it the affirmation of eternity and eternal goods."[2] Hence, what the invalid's hope centers on is the integrity not of himself as an organism but of himself in his being, which is to say, his soul.

> It is therefore of her very essence that when hope has been deceived in the realm of the visible, she should take refuge on a plane where she can no longer be disappointed.
>
> Even the integrity of the organism - when I hope for the recovery of an invalid - is, as it were, the prefiguring or

---

[1] Marcel, Mystery of Being, II, p. 179.
[2] Marcel, Being and Having, p. 75.

symbolic expression of a supreme integrity.

> In this sense, I say that all hope is the hope of salvation. There is no place for salvation except in a universe which admits of real injuries.[1]

> Hope consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all inventories and all calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me, which cannot but will that which I will, if what I will deserves to be willed and is, in fact, willed by the whole of my being.[2]

Thus, although it is a response to a situation of trial or captivity, hope is always an affirmation of trust in a "thou." In the instance of the invalid, his hope is an affirmation of trust in an "Absolute Thou" who is none other than God in whom he believes and whom he loves and from whom he has the expectation of the integrity of his soul because he loves Him.

Hope is humble. He who hopes realises that his hope does not depend entirely on himself but rather, if he perseveres in it, on the very assurance that God vouchsafes the integrity of his soul inasmuch as it is, in the words of Marcel, "a hazard - in danger of being lost - that must be saved.

Hope is patient, and the patience that belongs to hope is a relaxation in the sense of taking one's time.

> Does not he who hopes, and, as we have seen, has to contend with a certain trial comparable to a form of captivity, tend to treat this trial and proceed in regard to it as he who is patient towards himself treats his inexperienced young ego, the ego which needs educating and controlling. Above all he never lets it contract but, on the other hand, he does not allow it to kick over the traces of take control prematurely or unwarrantably.[3]

---

[1] Ibid., p. 75.

[2] Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 16.

[3] Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 39.

The most elaborate statement of the hope of the incurable invalid is perhaps best expressed in these words of Marcel: "I hope in Thee for us." This assertion directly opposes a monadist point of view on hope. The invalid is not an island unto himself who bases his hope on either the calculations or probabilities or on experience which shows that in the end things turn out for the better. Nor is his hope like that of the Stoic whose response to a trial is the acceptance of an inevitable fate which he adamantly refuses to anticipate and who bears himself as though he had no neighbors, as though he were concerned only with himself and had no responsibility towards anyone else.[1] In the problematic world the invalid was a member of a community in communication in which he was but an object to be characterized, manipulated, and controlled; all of which was detrimental to his singularity and being. Through love, faith, and hope, he has forsaken his membership in this community in communication and has joined the higher one of a community in communion. Perhaps a community in communion can be described as one in which its members share in the intimacy of that higher participation in being through love, faith, and hope. Through these they engage in the creative process of founding themselves as persons and of contributing to the creation of other persons. Thus they are joined in a union whose indestructibility is guaranteed by God, the Absolute Thou, who is the ultimate term of their love, faith, and hope. Hence, to love, to believe in, and to hope in one's fellow creatures is to do so in God. Therefore, when the incurable invalid, as a member of his community in communion, hopes, he can truly say, "I hope in

---

[1] Ibid., p. 38.

Thee for us - for the "us" embracing myself and those others who love, believe in, and hope in each other, and all this in You." In so saying, this invalid is but proclaiming that at the heart of reality there is a Being of Transcendent Value who will not frustrate our faith, love, and hope, and whose attainment as members of this community in communion, even in this life, brings the joy and fulfillment of being in the authenticity of our true qualities as persons of love, faith, and hope.

CHAPTER VII

MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY: AN EVALUATION

It may seem strange to say, but one has the unmistakable feeling that to study Marcel's philosophy is at the same time to know Marcel as a person. His personal qualities are intertwined with his metaphysics. Yet, the assertion that to study his thought is to know him as a person is not as strange as it might appear when it is recalled that for him philosophy begins in reflection on the ontological weight of personal experiences. The record of these reflections thus gives evidence of what kind of man he is. Furthermore, the works of Marcel are always written in the first person or, more exactly, in the style of an "I-Thou" dialogue. The effect of this manner of presenting formulations and positions resulting from reflections upon his experiences is that one has the feeling of being addressed not as a "him" but as a "thou;" a "thou" who is invited to backtrack with him, as it were, over the long and winding path of his experiences as he has lived them, reflected on them, and formulated a metaphysics as non-systematic as they are. In a very true sense, the study of Marcel's ontology is a retracing of the long and personal journey which he undertook to arrive at the seisure of his being and its value and indeed being itself and its value. Inevitably, therefore, his qualities as a person shine forth from his metaphysics. Marcel is anything but a spectator; which is to say, he does not look at the confusions and dangers of the world as though he were comfortably distant and uninvolved. On the contrary, he is

a participant who has come to the realization of the perilous situation in which the world now finds itself. He has come to see that he can save himself from despair, betrayal, and suicide only through a freely posited embrace of the indissoluble trinity of faith, hope, and love whose foundation is God Himself. The impression which one gets is that Marcel is a man who lives his philosophy and is indeed a man of faith, of love, and of hope. Marcel, the philosopher, and Marcel, the man, are joined as one in the indissolubilia of faith, hope, and love. As such, he extends to us a personal invitation to forsake the path to being of the abstractions of objective philosophy and, starting from the subjectivity of personal experience, to travel the road of the concrete approaches of faith, love, and hope.

It cannot be denied that Marcel's insights into the perfections and perversions of spiritual life are both beautiful and profound. One cannot but be struck with a deep sense of admiration at his analyses not only of faith, hope, and love but also of despair, suicide, and betrayal. They are masterpieces of thought wrought by a master of the art. His opposition of the world of mystery to the realm of the problematic carries with it a sense of concern and urgency that is almost palpable. His analyses of being, existence, and having are likewise profound, original, and brilliant.

Despite these accolades to a brilliant philosopher, it must be stated that his philosophy is fundamentally circumscribed by the danger that derives from the very subjectivity upon which he bases his metaphysics. The danger inherent in a metaphysics founded in subjectivity becomes all the more apparent when coupled with the fact that such a philosophy denies any place in it for objective knowledge that is properly philosophical.

What is subjectivity? Perhaps the beginning of an answer to this question is provided by a personal example. On the top of the desk at which this dissertation is being written is a desk pad to which this writer is emotionally attached. It was his during his days in the major seminary from 1937 to 1939. Subsequently, it was on the desks at which he did his work as an undergraduate and graduate student, teacher, assistant principal, and principal. During the course of the thirty two years it has been his, a whole host of associations and attachments have come to be permanently linked with this pad; associations and attachments which cannot be put in objective terms because to do so destroys them. They can be personally experienced only by this writer; they can never be communicated in their reality to another because they are subjective and there is really no way of rendering them exterior. The same can be said of a person who loves, believes in, and hopes in another. These are subjective, and according to Marcel, are beyond anything which we can call objective.

Father Troisfontaines, the author of an outstanding study of Marcel's philosophy, gives the following definition of subjectivity.

> Subjectivity, then, is the realm of those realities which belong most profoundly to my personal being, those which constitute it in its innermost reality, and which, for that reason, I cannot separate from myself. It is the mystery in which I am immersed and in which I constantly live but which I cannot express in terms of problems without altering its very nature.[1]

This definition of Troifontaines is clearly based on the thought of Marcel and brings into sharp focus the relation between mystery and subjectivity.

---

[1]Roger Troifontaines, "What is Existentialism?" Thought, Fordham University Quarterly, Vol. XXXII, No. 124. Spring 1957, p.58.

The realities that constitute a person in his subjectivity are mysterious because they are inseparable from him and therefore beyond objectisation. But, as Marcel states, it is always possible to degrade a mystery by the objectisation of thought which converts it into a problem. To detail in conceptual terms the love, let us say, one person has for another is to degrade its subjectivity from the mysterious to the problematical. Love is loved love, and love thought about is no longer love, just as the evil thought about is no longer the evil suffered. The whole of Marcel's metaphysics centers on the individual person constituted in the subjectivity of those realities in which he is intrinsically and inseparably involved; which is to say, in the subjectivity not only of the mysteries of his being, his love, faith, and hope, and God, but also and conversely in the mysteries of a denial of being, despair, betrayal, and hatred. It might seem unwarranted to say that a denial of being, hatred, despair, and betrayal are mysteries. But can a person stand outside and away from his denial, betrayal, despair, and hatred? They are as inseparably subjective as are love, faith, and hope, and thought about them destroys them; they are lived acts inseparable from the person who posits them.

Troisfontaines' definition contains an ambiguity that needs to be removed. When he states that subjectivity is the realm of those realities from which I cannot separate myself does he mean that all or only some of them are inseparable under all circumstances? According to Marcel's thought, the individual, as an incarnate being, is under all circumstances inseparable from those mysterious realities of being, his soul, and God as present within him but only under certain conditions (a perduring and freely posited embrace) are

the mysterious realities of love or hate, faith or betrayal, hope or despair inseparable from him. In short, it would seem necessary to postulate for the inseparability of the mysterious realities of being, one's own being, and God a certain ontological impossibility, and to postulate for the inseparability of the mysterious realities of love or hatred, faith or betrayal, and hope or despair the condition of their being freely and perduringly embraced. Their rejection, therefore, would necessarily entail their separation from the innermost being of the individual.

The inevitable question then arises: on what bases are the mysterious realities of faith, hope, and love to be preferred to those of hatred, betrayal, and despair? To put it even more specifically: Why is Marcel any more metaphysically correct than Sartre? If one's philosophy is exclusive of objective knowledge - and Marcel's is - no criteria of preference and truth can be furnished. Let us remember that Marcel asserts that his metaphysics is not demonstrative, that the subject matter of his ontology is beyond characterisation of objective knowledge which is universally valid for all men, that his philosophy is an appeal to the individual to reflect on his subjective experiences, that the work of metaphysics is the work of freedom. Now, if a metaphysics - to be approached through love, faith, and hope - is founded on subjectivity, what claims can be brought forward to prove at the philosophical level that this philosophy is true and that a philosophy of non-being which eventuates in despair, hatred, betrayal, and nausea is fundamentally in error? If subjectivity is the only criterion for determining the truth or error of a philosophy, then both a philosophy of being and a philosophy of non-being can claim equal validity from the point of view of their respective subjectivities.

As Troisfontaines states:

> Each claims to be right from his own point of view. Who will decide? Who will determine the hierarchy of these perspectives? Who will show where truth and goodness lie, or where, on the contrary, there is a perversion? Under the pain of falling into subjectivism, subjectivity has to place itself on an objective foundation, and it must do so according to norms which, far from crushing freedom, will be the sole means of enabling it not to degrade itself. Subjectivity and objectivity have complementary roles to play, and it would be equally harmful to abandon the one as to reject the other.[1]

Thus, the danger inherent in subjectivity which is exclusively foundational in Marcel's metaphysics becomes apparent. He has no answer or rebuttal to the person who denies the truth and validity of his metaphysics other than to say to that person that he is right from his point of view. In effect he is saying, "I have shut myself off from the setting forth of any objectively valid demonstrations of the truth of my philosophy, but I appeal to you to follow the path I have chosen in the belief that I am right."

It would seem that Marcel has set up an unnecessary dichotomy between demonstration and appeal. Now, it is possible to appeal to someone to tell you something you need to know. Again, it is possible to appeal to someone to follow you even though you admit that you cannot demonstratively establish the reasons for so doing. But so also is it possible to make an appeal for the acceptance of a metaphysics on the basis of its demonstrability. In brief, it is contended that Marcel's appeal as embodied in his ontology should be based on a body of objectively demonstrated truths in order to safeguard the truths founded on subjectivity. An appeal without demonstration and based on reflected subjectivity is always open to a denial which cannot be refuted.

---

[1]Troisfontaines, "What Is Existentialism?"

When Marcel grounded his metaphysics in mystery and maintained that it was beyond characterization, the net result was that knowledge by mode of conceptualization had no place in it. There is no claim made that his phenomenological descriptions are statements of the nature of metaphysical mysteries. Now statements as to what the nature of things are constitute their definitions. But, according to Marcel, to define is to reduce to object, and were he to permit the characterization of definition a place in his ontology, his philosophy's ultimate grounding would no longer be subjectivity but, rather, objectivity. This Marcel would not allow. The upshot of this vetoing of conceptual seizure is that his philosophy is not a speculative formulation. Having excluded his metaphysics from the realm of the speculative, he had no other choice but to seek a place for it in the domain of the practical; the credentials of his philosophy were such that it was readily granted admission.

> Finally, the existentialists make common cause in defense of the practical orientation of philosophy. There is a jejune sense in which most thinkers admit the need for both speculative and practical philosophy. But because of the close connection established between awareness of human freedom and philosophizing, the existentialists are obliged to break down this classical distinction. Their polemic against naturalism has led them into a similar exaggeration of the practical factor, although considered this time in a moral context. They are forced to deny that speculation is genuinely philosophical (in the sense of having existential import) unless it takes formal cognizance of man's free actions. They have introduced a practical moral differentia into the very conception of philosophy as such, because of their inability to discover a distinctively speculative aspect of existence.[1]

That the truth of Collins' statements applies to Marcel becomes evident when

---

[1]James Collins, The Existentialists (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952), pp. 118-119.

it is recalled that Marcel himself asserted that "no objectively valid judgement bearing on being is possible."[1]

That Marcel's metaphysics is practical becomes patent from a consideraton of the differences between the speculative and practical functions of intellect and the application of this to Marcel's basic position.

The differences between the speculative and the practical are clearly set forth by both Aristotle and St. Thomas.

> Mind, that is, which calculates means to an end, i.e., mind practical (it differs from mind speculative in the character of its end.)[2]

> What affirmation and negation are in thinking, pursuit and avoidance are in desire; so that since moral virtue is a state of character concerned with choice, and choice is deliberate desire, therefore both the reasoning must be true and the desire right, if the choice is to be good, and the latter must pursue just what the former asserts. Now this kind of intellect and truth is practical; of the intellect which is contemplative, not practical nor productive, the good and the bad are truth and falsity respectively (for this is the work of everything intellectual); while of the past which is practical and intellectual the good state is truth in agreement with right appetite.[3]

> I answer that, the speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers. The reason for this is, as we have said above, that what is accidental to the nature of the object of a power does not differentiate that power; for it is accidental to a colored thing to be a man, or to be great or small. Hence all such things are apprehended by the same power of sight. Now, to a thing apprehended by the intellect, it is accidental whether it be directed to operation or not; but it is according to this that the speculative and practical intellects differ. For it is the speculative intellect which directs what it apprehends, not to operation, but to the sole consideration of truth; while the practical intellect is that which directs what it apprehends to operation. And this is what the

---

[1]Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 98.

[2]Aristotle, De Anima, III, 10 (433a14).

[3]Aristotle, Ethics, VI, 2 (1139a 21).

> Philosopher says, namely, that the speculative differs from the practical in its end. Whence each is named from its end; the one speculative, the other practical - i.e., operative.[1]

> Truth and good include one another; for truth is something good, or otherwise it would not be desirable, and good is something true, or otherwise it would not be intelligible. Therefore, just as the object of the appetite may be something true, as having the aspect of good (for example, when some one desires to know the truth), so the object of the practical intellect is the good directed to operation, under the aspect of truth. For the practical intellect knows truth, just as the speculative, but it directs the known truth to operation.[2]

> As is stated in Ethics vi, truth is not the same for the practical as for the speculative intellect. For the truth of the speculative intellect depends on the conformity of the intellect to the thing. And since the intellect cannot be infallibly in conformity with things in contingent matters, but only in necessary matters, therefore no speculative habit about contingent things is an intellectual virtue, but only such as is about necessary things. On the other hand, the truth of the practical depends on conformity with right appetite. This conformity has no place in necessary matters which can be affected by us, whether they be matters of interior action or the products of external work.[3]

In the Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition, the object of the intellect is being; being is that which the intellect seeks to know. Implicit in this is that each singular and existant being has a nature which is proper to it and by virtue of this nature is what it is and exclusive of what it is not. Furthermore, man is endowed with an intellect which is capable of intentional representation of these natures. And because things in the real order are what they are and exclusive of what they are not, the principles of identity and contradiction hold in both the real and logical order. Now when through the avenue of the senses the intellect represents the nature of a thing, and

---

[1]St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 79, a. 11.

[2]St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae I, q. 79, a. 11, ad 2.

[3]St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 57, a. 57, ad 3.

when that re-presentation is in conformity with the nature of the thing as it exists in reality, then this adequation of mind to thing is constitative of speculative truth. Therefore when our intellect is concerned with the nature of a thing, this is a speculative function of mind. As both St. Thomas and Aristotle say, the end of the speculative intellect is the truth of things in their nature.

Not only are things true in their intelligibility; they are also good in so far as they are desirable and object of appetite. Things, in so far as they are good, are the object of appetite precisely because the object of appetite is the good. But will follows the intellect, which is to say, knowledge of the good must precede the operation of the will. It is the function of the practical intellect to consider the good thing in so far as it is good and object of appetite. The practical intellect is ordered to what can be done, what can be pursued, of means to an end as object of the will. In brief, the practical is ordered to the operable. By definition, therefore, the practical is not concerned with a knowledge of the nature of a thing in so far as its truth is involved; it is concerned with a knowledge of things as capable of being done, as capable of being pursued, as means to an end. The truth of the practical consists in conformity with appetite which ultimately must be rectified to what God has demanded of us. Hence, the practical, unlike the speculative, is interested in bringing a work or a deed into existence. A word of caution should be given here. It must be remembered that acts of the will and the speculative and practical intellect are attributable to the person. It is not the will that wills but the person that wills; the same holds true for the operation of intellect. This is based on the old Thomistic

axiom that actiones sunt suppositorum.

The whole of Marcel's metaphysics is pervaded by his insistence that ontologically being is of value. In connection with this, it must be remembered that for Marcel being is not patient of speculative and objective affirmations, and that, consequently, the only affirmations that can be made of being are practical judgements of value. Now, by definition, value is that which is or can be sought or pursued. Hence, that which is value is capable of being the object of the will. But being as an ontological value can become that which the will seeks only on the condition that there is an apprehension by the practical intellect of being as a value in so far as it is a value. In large part, the metaphysical analyses of Marcel are but practical considerations of being as a value, as object and end of appetite. However, these considerations are not formulated merely for their own sake. They form Marcel's metaphysical bases on which the free choice between better or worse alternatives are to be made, namely the negation of being by a freely posited denial or its affirmation by a freely posited acceptance of being. The practical nature of Marcel's thought makes freedom not only an inevitable but also an integral and necessary element in his philosophy. For him philosophy is a work of freedom based on the practical recognition of being as a value and the value of the concrete approaches to being as end and object of appetite.

As was said previously, Marcel's philosophy begins in the need for transcendence which is made manifest in a deeply experienced dissatisfaction. Two things stand out clearly in Marcel's position: first, the practical recognition of this need; second; the fact that by definition need is connected with appetite. Now, that to which transcendence is directed is being as a

value. Horizontally, this transcendence is to our own being and that of our fellow creatures; vertically, it is to that Being of value which is God Himself. Having excluded any objective affirmations about being, finite and infinite being can be considered only at the practical level of value. In addition, the concrete approaches (love, faith, and hope) to objectively and speculatively non-characterizable but valuable being are themselves objectively and speculatively non-characterizable but valuable. Thus, being and the concrete approaches to being, immersed in and inseparable from value, are apprehended by the practical intellect in so far as they are values and thereby end and object of the will. And the criterion of the truth of Marcel's metaphysics is its relation to the satisfaction of the appetite of being and, ultimately, to the appetite being rectified to the order of the Absolute Thou.

Marcel is deeply and profoundly conscious of the metaphysical mystery of being, but at the same time he is distrustful of the objectivity of the intellect. This conviction and attitude, by his own admission, manifested itself early in his youthful perception that judgement was radically defective in obviating the insolubilia of differences in character, temperament, and outlook operative in the relations between human beings. This distrust of the intellect was strengthened by his sojourn in Idealism where the intellect is conceived as centering on essence to the disregard of existence. The neglect of existence caused him to forsake Idealism. But his rejection of Idealism did not result in his overcoming his distrust of the objectivity of the intellect. He does not allow room in his ontology for the speculative intellect for the reason that he still regards it as centering on essences to the disregard of existence. This bias against the intellect is the reason why

he denies that we have an intellectual intuition of being as such.

> ....to be told of an intuitive knowledge of being is like being invited to play on a soundless piano. Such an intuition cannot be brought into the light of day, for the simple reason that we do not possess it.[1]

But in Being and Having Marcel states, "I feel that I am today rid of whatever traits of Idealism remained in my philosophy."[2] But there is cause to wonder how thoroughly rid of Idealistic traits he really is. In fact, Maritain attributes his denial of the intuition of being to his Idealistic prepodsessions.

> If a philosopher who is powerfully aware of the ontological mystery is convinced that it cannot be an intuition, it is because idealistic prepossessions do not suffer him to address himself to his intellect as such and trust it to satisfy his search. We cannot but see in this attitude the effect of an unsurmounted prejudice against the objectivity of the intellect, which is idealistically conceived. In the consequences of this prejudice he will seek to make contact with the ontological mystery so to speak by a circuitous route which leads through the subjective domain, therefore specifically by way of the obscure apprehension of love, and thus skirts the object we term being. This object, however, is not a screen, it is being itself. Therefore love does not really skirt it but enters it after its fashion, as does the intellect after its own.[3]

The existential character of Marcel's thought now becomes evident. His philosophy pertains not to the realm of the intellect but to that of the will. By its refusal to submit thought to objective being according to the laws of the mind, it simply does not know the truth. On the contrary, Marcel lives

---

[1]Marcel, Philosophy of Existence, p. 14.

[2]Marcel, Being and Having, p. 27.

[3]Jacques Maritain, A Preface to Metaphysics (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948), p. 60.

this truth and assimilates it into the subjectivity of his being.

Having eliminated the speculative from his metaphysics, he had no other recourse but to adopt the practical. But even this adoption was not complete. He rejected the universal characterizations of science which, terminatively speaking, are practical. And they are practical because science is interested in quantifiable, verifiable, predictable, and controllable phenomena. Modern science is not interested in essence but only in appearances. Hence, Marcel was quite right in his rejection of scientific knowledge which when applied to man reduces him not to an essential object but to a phenomenal object. The point to be made, however, is that this double rejection resulted in his position that contact with the ontological mystery can be made only through love, faith, and hope. These make this contact because they meet the condition necessary for so doing - attainment of subject as subject. The objective affirmations of the speculative intellect and the practical characterizations of science are consigned to the world of the problematic. The reason being that they reduce the subject existentially enveloped in his singularity and subjectivity to the status of an object. Furthermore, they are, according to Marcel, juxtaposed to the "me" of the subject and therefore stand outside of and away from it.

Thomistic metaphysics is an intellectual existentialism. Its object is being as such. It is not concerned with sensible being, nor particularized being of the sciences, nor being of logic. It is concerned with being <u>in quantum est ens</u> - being in so far as it is being. For St. Thomas, as for Aristotle, being as such is that which is. In this descriptive definition of being the conceptualizable has been joined to the inconceptualizable. The

"that" refers to conceptualizable essence, and "is" refers to inconceptualizable existence. Being is essence actualized by existence. It is not essence alone; it is not existence alone. In being essence and existence, although really distinct, are inseparable. Being to be a being must be an essence actualized by existence. It is the intellectual intuition of being as such that founds Thomistic metaphysics.

Thus, Thomistic and Aristotelian metaphysics is opposed to an error that is found in Plato, discovered again in Descartes, operative in Idealism, and at work in the philosophy of Marcel; the error, namely, that the objectivity of the intellect bears solely on essences. Essence and existence are inseparably conjoined in being, and existence is the superintelligible which confers intelligibility on essence. Marcel's distrust of the objectivity of the intellect and its accompanying denial of an intellectual intuition of being are radical weaknesses in his metaphysics.

This leads into Marcel's view of the classical proofs of the existence of God. This he sets forth in Faith and Reality, the second volume of The Mystery of Being. His contention is that the classical demonstrations of God's existence are but clarifying formulations of an already adhered to belief in His existence. This to him is a paralogism; the demonstrations rest on the previous acceptance of the belief in His existence. He further holds that these proofs are ineffectual because the believer has no need of them, and the non-believer will not accept them. In response, it can be said that belief or non-belief is extrinsic to the force and validity of demonstrative proof. No demonstration can compel assent to it. For that matter the appeal of one who believes in God's existence is unable to force assent. As Marcel

himself agrees, the only way to change non-belief into belief is through the grace of a conversion. At a deeper level, Marcel will not accept the classical proofs because of his position that judgement bears on essence. There is a double thrust in his maintaining that judgement bears on essence. First, since God is beyond characterization, no objective judgements about His essence are possible. Second and more germaine to what is under discussion, it does not bear on existence. Therefore, no objective judgements on God's existence are possible. Now, if demonstration, as a process of reasoning, is composed of the judgements of the major premise, minor premise, and the conclusion, and if judgement bears only on essence, then no demonstrative proof of God's existence is possible. Once again Marcel's distrust of the objectivity of the intellect is made manifest. It not only condemns him to not knowing objectively anything about God's essence; it also condemns him to precluding the possibility of demonstratively establishing His Existence. Not only that, but his peculiar usage and signification of the term existence prevents him from saying that he believes in the existence of God. All that he can say is that he believes that God is He Who is. Marcel's distrust of the intellect vitiates his criticism of the proofs of God's existence.

His metaphysics is a metaphysics of morality - of the morality of faith, hope, and love. As St. Thomas says:

> Every practical science is concerned with the things man can do; as moral science is concerned with human acts and architecture with buildings.[1]

---

[1]St. Thomas, Summa Theologiae, I, q. 1, a.4.

Marcel's metaphysics is a moral metaphysics. And man's will and its freedom must necessarily enter into his doctrine because morality is concerned with the quality of man's free and deliberate acts. His ontology is the appeal to the individual to freely choose faith, hope, and love rather than betrayal, despair, and hatred. The first principle of the moral order - do good and avoid evil - perform the regulative task in metaphysics which for St. Thomas and Aristotle was performed by the first principles of being. While it is true that Marcel's philosophy is the attempt to elucidate the ontological import of one's personal experience, the resultant import evinced is always subordinate to the salvation of one's being - that "hasard" which is our soul and whose loss at the level of being is perdition. Instead of transcending ethics, his philosophy becomes enmeshed in it. In speaking of Heiddeger and Marcel, Maritain says:

> The two others belong to the practical and the moral order.[1]

Marcel's philosophy is open to the charge that the individual's love of, faith in, and hope in God and One's fellow creature are but the means to escape the desperation of despair, betrayal, and suicide. This would seem to be borne out by his assertion that they are essential reference points for all sound metaphysical thinking. Not only that, but he links despair, betrayal, and suicide with the world of technics when he maintains that the latter seems to counsel them. Hence, the only way to escape these starkly real possibilities is to ascend to being by participation in it through love, faith,

---

[1]Maritain, Preface to Metaphysics, p. 51.

and hope. In connection with this Sciacca states:

> The terms of the tension are, then, the problem (the sphere of the problematic as a problem) and mystery (the metaproblematical) within which I am secluded. Yet the relationship is solved in a way detrimental to mystery: as regards the zone of the problematical (of reason), the mystery if the non-problem and thus the relationship is between a non-problem (mystery) and the problem; in this relationship the whole force of tension pushing me toward mystery is given by the despair produced by the zone of the problematical, that is, by the terror or the problem (scepticism) which is charged with full positivity while hope and mystery are only a refuge whose sense and attractiveness are given solely by the problem. In such relationship the metaproblematical receives all its positivity (and even its weight) from the "intensity" of the problem. In other words, the exasperation of the problematical (namely, of the doubting and objective thought) give it an "intensity superior to that of mystery which almost receives its intensity from the other. Then, even the intensity and strength of faith are not given positively through a love for God who is entirely for the creature, but through the intensity of a desperation that is strong and infinite, since it is granted that the objective as such is despairing to point of suicide. Metaproblematical and faith in God, also God Himself are unimportant in this position: I love God and believe in Him intensely in order to escape desperation.[1]

Marcel's metaphysics of participation, based in subjectivity, distrustful of the objectivity of the intellect, and seeking to make contact with being through the concrete approaches of faith, hope, and love, is not truly metaphysical. As for the concrete approaches, they can bring us to the threshold of being and, in so doing, perform a valuable service. But for a metaphysics to be truly metaphysical, it must make the leap to an intellectual intuition of being. Otherwise, it remains in the domain of morals and is a mimic of metaphysics. Commenting on concrete approaches to being, Maritain declares:

> ...the most serious danger which all these methods of approaching being involves is the danger of remaining imprisoned in one or

---

[1]Michele F. Sciacca, Philosophical Trends in the Contemporary World (Notre Dame, Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), pp. 309-310.

> the other of the concrete analogues of being, whichever one has chosen as a path to it. The experience in question gives information only of itself. This is indeed the drawback of pure experience in philosophy and the pitfall of every metaphysical system which attempts to be metaphysical. The experience, though valid for the domain covered by the particular intuition, cannot, save by an arbitrary procedure, be extended to a wider province of the intelligible world, and be employed to explain it.[1]

Thus, we see that the profound and inspiring insights of Marcel into love, faith, hope, presence, and availability are beclouded by the philosophical difficulties inherent in subjectivity, weakened by the rejection of an intellectual intuition of being, and to a degree distorted by their inclusion in the realm of mystery. But despite all of this, who can gainsay the value of much of his philosophical labours? Who can deny the truth value of much of what he has to say of the concrete approaches to being? Who can deny that his elucidation of these spiritual data is patient of application to the insolubilia of character, temperament, and outlook which pervade so many human situations? The force, profundity, and beauty of his philosophy is such that in criticising it, this writer felt somewhat like Plato who accused himself of particide when he raised the hand of criticism against Parmenides. The study of Marcel's philosophy has been, in all honesty, a labor of love. The reward of that labor has been a deeper realisation of the meaning of the words of St. Augustine who said that man is an unknowable abyss. Certainly, we can attain an objective knowledge of our essence as human beings, but then to know that is to know the subject as object. But one's personal subjectivity as subjectivity is beyond knowledge by mode of conceptualisation and to that degree is an

---

[1]Maritain, Preface to Metaphysics, p. 52.

unknowable abyss. The edges of the depth of subjectivity can be skirted by a self awareness, but such consciousness is an affirmation of subjectivity which gives rise to no distinct act of thought representative of subjectivity as subjectivity. If it is not possible for the individual to know himself in his subjectivity, a fortiori, he cannot know by concept the subjectivity as subjectivity of others. Truly, as persons we are incommunicable beings. We cannot really give our subjectivity as such to others either by mode of communication or multiplication. We can communicate with others about our subjectivity. That we do this is confirmed by the various kinds of discourse that is carried on ad infinitum. In this communication about our subjectivity what is given is not our subjectivity as subjectivity; it is rather the objectisation of our subjectivity that is transmitted. Our subjectivity as such escapes these communications. Nor can we communicate our subjectivity as such by multiplication. We cannot give to another our emotions, our expectations, our thoughts, our volitions just as we have lived and are living them. The uniqueness of our subjectivity is forever contained in and circumscribed by our personally exercised subsistence as persons. The inescapable fact is that in our subjectivity we are indeed isolated by the very incommunicability involved in being a person. We can possess no one in his subjectivity, nor can anyone possess us in ours. Communication by objective discourse will not bridge the gulf between isolated centers of subjectivity. The spanning of the gap that is the isolation of one's subjectivity from another is more closely but never completely accomplished by love, faith, and hope. It is in these that we come to knowledge not only of the subjectivity of others but also our own. Nevertheless, this knowledge of subjectivity

precludes that by mode of conceptualization and is knowledge gathered by the connaturality of love, faith, and hope. Knowledge of subjectivity is gained through love that loves, faith that believes, and hope that hopes, which is to say a lived love, a lived faith, and a lived hope. The bridging of the gap of the isolation of subjectivity is completed by God. Our subjectivity stands exposed before the infinite gaze of Infinite Being. He alone knows us as subject and in the depths of our subjectivity. Who knows us as we really are? Who can do justice to our being? The answer is and must be that it can only be God. We are finite, contingent, and dependent centers of subjectivity who at the human level are unknowable abysses both to ourselves and others; unknowable abysses, however, who are transparent to the Knowledge which is God Himself who not only knows us but loves us in the very depths of our subjectivity as persons.

Marcel's philosophy has been the guiding light which illumined the way to these personal seizures of subjectivity and its implications. It has been an inviting and friendly light even though dependent upon a fuel that is philosophically contaminated. But despite the quality of the fuel, Marcel's light is well worth the use. There can be no doubt that he offers a unique explication of human existence in which human integrity is safeguarded and God is not denied. His philosophy renders mute the anguished cry of Nietzsche that God is dead and destroys his myth of the Superman. Marcel's philosophy is an antidote to the philosophical poison of Sartre who proclaims the absolute and unguided autonomy of man, the project, who is what he is not and will never come to be what he is; of man, the project for whom generosity is a form of destruction and the basis of the social order is hatred; of man, the project,

for whom existence is an absurdity and bad faith the order of the day.

CHAPTER VIII

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PERSON IN EDUCATION

A philosophy of education is a formulation that derives from the application of a given philosophy to that development of human potentialities which is termed education. The phrase "given philosophy" is used purposely because there are almost as many various and opposed philosophies of education as there are various and opposed philosophies. Thus, we have philosophies of education whose respective philosophical roots are in Thomism, Idealism, Pragmatism, Scientific Realism, or Humanistic Aristotelianism. Only within the recent past - the 1950's - have attempts been made to formulate a philosophy of education whose philosophical foundation is Existentialism. Such men as Harper, Kneller, Soderquist, and Van Cleve Morris have striven to apply Existentialism to education. In each instance, the resultant formulation derives not from a particular existentialist position but, rather, from a syncretistic melange of agreement and disagreement within the body Existentialism. The upshot of the situation is that the atheistic existentialism of Sartre is likely to be companion to the theistic version of Marcel, or, at least, both may be quoted with equal facility in order to explicate an Existentialist philosophy of education. The result is that the particular flavor (if such an expression is permissible) and nuances of thought in a given existentialist's philosophy are lost in the philosophic commonality in which they are immersed.

Therefore, the question is whether a philosophy of education can be evolved from Marcel's metaphysics. The answer is in the affirmative. However, from a Thomistic perspective, a philosophy of education based exclusively on Marcel's philosophy would suffer the same deficiencies that plague the very philosophy from which it originates: distrust of the objectivity of the intellect and the inability of the intellect to intuit being. Such a philosophy of education would be like Minerva, somewhat debilitated, springing forth from the head of Jupiter. Yet, there can be no doubt that Marcel's metaphysics is applicable to education. To evolve a fully rounded Marcellian philosophy of education is beyond the purpose and scope of this dissertation. Therefore, the attempt in this chapter is to set forth in a rudimentary and limited fashion some implications for education of Marcel's philosophy in the hope that the resultant formulation will be of immediate and practical use to those engaged in the task and profession of education.

At this juncture, it would be judicious to stress several points which will then serve the purpose of indicating the status quaestionis, i.e., what is and what is not discussed in this chapter. First, education is restricted to formal or institutionalized education. Second, the thrust of this chapter is not primarily concerned with setting forth the educational implications of Marcel's philosophy. This certainly could be done. But the danger is that the resultant philosophy of education might well be a systematic and objective presentation which furnishes us with but a dessicated version of Marcel's personalism. It seems best, therefore, to emphasize that the educational implications of his philosophy are to be applied primarily to the person as he is engaged in developing human potentialities within the institution called

the school. Finally, what is presented applies to educand and educator throughout the entire range of formal education.

The most striking educational implications of Marcel's philosophy are those derived from his analyses of the person, subjectivity, love, faith, and hope. The writer makes this assertion not as a philosopher of education whose experience in the process of education is limited to the peripheral and vicarious contact of scholarly study, but as one who has been directly engaged over the last eighteen years in the field of education as teacher, assistant principal, and principal. The implications of Marcel's philosophy have a startling relevance to those human agencies in education - educand, teacher, and administrator—through and by whom there comes into existence that effect known as education.

Education or, more exactly, formal and institutionalized education is in danger of becoming as broken as the larger world which has brought it forth and of which it is a part. The world is broken in the sense that the misplacement of the idea of function has resulted in an increasing tendency to view the person in terms of his functions. The roots of this tendency to so regard the person are to be found in the habitus of technics so prevalent in a world which is becoming more and more scientific and technological. The ascendency of science and technology, which are concerned only with objects and their functions, has resulted in an ever growing predisposition of people to disregard themselves and others as persons and centers of mysterious subjectivity and to view others and themselves as agglomerations of functions; agglomerations whose purpose is to serve some larger social goal of material prosperity, progress, and security. Thus, we regard the man from whom we

purchase something as the salesman; the woman who works in an office as a clerk; the man who drives the bus as the bus driver. Even persons with whom we are acquainted are viewed by us in terms of various functions such as father, union member, executive, lawyer, and so on. The individual, caught up in the activities and pursuits of an industrial and commercial society based on scientific and technological operationism, is more and more inclined to view himself as a collection of functions. The upshot of the whole situation is that the person in the uniqueness of his singularity and in his subjectivity tends increasingly to be reduced by himself and others to the universalized and functionalized status of an object. It is this reduction of subject to object that has stopped the heart of the world from beating. To the degree that the person in education tends to regard himself and others as agglomerations of educational functions which can be enumerated, collated, and registered, to that degree does the person and his subjectivity disappear and the danger of identifying the person with his educational functions increase.

There can be no gainsaying that science and technics permeate education. Profound changes in education have not only taken place but also are now considered desirable and normal.

Let us first consider some of these changes as they relate to and have an impact on the educand. Materials of instruction, particularly at the elementary level, are designed so as to promote efficient learning as determined by empricially derived norms of experimental psychology. Scientific theories of learning, and there are a number of them, are based on a purely naturalistic concept of the individual human being and are validated by experimentation either in animal learning or in the learning of human beings

who are regarded as so many scientific objects. Now that testing has become an indispensable educational tool, the educand is subjected regularly to scientifically standardized tests of scholastic aptitude, achievement, personality, and vocational interests. Pitted against scientifically objective norms, the student is hewn and hammered into the statistical perspective of measures of central tendency and variability. Guidance services are devised according to the canons of empirical evidence. Counseling services are based on scientific theories of personality, and counseling techniques center on either a given personality theory or an eclectic ensemble of such theories. The school record of the educand is entered on scientifically devised forms and carefully preserved, like an effigy, in a filing system emperically derived. If anyone wants to become knowledgeable about a student, all that is necessary is to look in his folder and there he is all neatly wrapped up and recorded. The desks at which the educand works, the classroom, and indeed the very buildings have been designed according to the empirical criteria of health, comfort, and maximum utility. Finally, the dossier of the educand has become a part of a total plan of computer programming. Cybernetics has touched him with its objective and inhuman hand.

Teachers have also felt the impact of science and technics. In the course of their training, they are subjected, in most instances, to a philosophy of education based on either the tenets of a scientifically oriented Pragmatism or those of Scientific Realism which regards philosophy as a body of generalizations of the empirical findings of science. They are grounded in a psychology of education that is thoroughly scientific; are exposed to various subject matter methodologies whose validity is based on the results of long

and extensive experimentation. In addition, they are inoculated with the findings of experimental research into group dynamics, and are familiarized with the empirical bases of guidance and counseling. Thus equipped, teachers take up their positions in the classroom. And the scientific bias of their training is reinforced by the school staff itself, the professional materials they read, their in-service training, the professional groups to which they belong.

Administrators, who themselves were teachers, have superimposed upon an already established scientific approach to teaching an orientation to administration and supervision based on the behavioral sciences which are concerned with the actions, reactions, and interactions of individuals and groups as they prosecute some determinate goal. Like teaching, administration is a skill. But skill does not work in a vacuum. For the administrator, his skill is enhanced by his knowledge of administrative theory and research, scientifically and objectively conceived.

All of this may sound like a jeremiad against science in education. Neither a condemnation nor a denigration of its presence and influence in education is implied or intended. There can be no doubt of the value for education of much of what science has contributed. No one can gainsay the valuable contributions of educational psychology which has done so much to promote efficiency in learning. Research into methods of teaching have provided excellent tools waiting for the hand of the teacher who can use them. The testing movement and scientific insights into personality have been of inestimable service in the guidance and counseling of the educand. Nevertheless, the contributions of science, valuable though they be, are accompanied

by a growing spirit of science in education. When coupled with the fact that the larger society served by education is itself characterized as scientific and technological, it is no wonder that education is becoming increasingly scientific both in operation and spirit. Further, what should be kept in mind is the purely naturalistic orientation of science. Based on the philosophy of Naturalism, the behavioral sciences' view of the human person is that there is no essential difference between man and brute except that of degree. In addition, science is operational, and inevitably the human person on whom the behavioral sciences lavish so much attention and effort is conceived operationally as a functionalized object offering unlimited opportunity for experimental research. On the basis of this research, the person, as an agglomeration of scientifically conceived functions, can be tabulated, collated, arranged, and harmonized so that predictions can be made and controls devised. The behavioral sciences are striving to evolve a unified science of man in which all the uncertainty and unpredictability of human behavior will be overcome. This striving is seen at work in such diverse areas as marketing, sales, executive promotion, and work-force productivity. And there is solid ground for asserting that the era of social engineering is well on its way. The field of education offers a fertile domain for such engineering, and the behavioral sciences have undertaken an incursion into that domain.

Thus, the person in education, be he educand, teacher, or administrator, is increasingly in danger of the same reduction that is occurring on all too broad a scale in the larger and broken world of technics. He labors under the constant threat of being reduced to a scientific object.

Someone may object that the person in education, the educand for instance

is not regarded as ontologically constituted as an agglomeration of functions, but conceived functionally to promote his proper and efficient development. The objection, while in the main probably true, misses the point at issue. The danger in conceiving functionally the person in education so as to facilitate his development is that, quite unwittingly and quite without realizing it, such a conception can shade into one that is ontological and representative of the nature of the educand. A further point must be made. The educationally facilitating view of the educand as a functionalised object necessarily precludes a grasp of his subjectivity, which is to say, of that interiority of life which is incommunicably his. The consequence may well be that the educand, throughout the time of his formal education, is stripped of, or neglected in, his subjectivity. The educand, therefore, is exposed to the everpresent danger of a purely natural obliteration of his subjectivity and his quality as a person. Marcel would and does reject the "purely natural" and the consequences that flow from its adoption. The singulairty, the worth, and the subjectivity of the person must be preserved, protected, and defended by those in education who are aware of their monumental importance.

Someone else, however, may raise this further objection: granting the danger to the person and his subjectivity in reducing him to a scientific and functionalized object, is it not true that at the level of intellection as such the subject has always been known as object? If this is true, has not education, since it proceeds by way of conceptualization, always known the person as object? This objection is unanswerable, and its truth and validity are founded on the very structure of the human intellect. As stated previously, our intellectual knowledge of the person proceeds by way of objective concepts.

The inescapable result is that intellectually we can know the person only under the aspect of universality. When we say of a student that he is cooperative or indifferent, bright or dull, well behaved or a discipline problem, responsible or irresponsible, the judgements thus formulated have garnished the singularity of the student as a person with universal and objective predicates. These certainly qualify as knowledge, but what eludes their grasp is the person in his singularity and subjectivity. Again, when an administrator says of a teacher that he is satisfactory or excellent, cooperative or uncooperative, professional or unprofessional, enthusiastic or dull, what is true of the student is true also of the teacher: his subjectivity as subjectivity escapes these judgmental pronouncements of the administrator.

Perhaps a situational example, based on the experience of the writer as an administrator of an inner-city elementary school will clarify much of what just has been said.

The school serves a neighborhood which, although it is part of the Black ghetto, is not a slum. Broadly speaking, the families whose children attend the school belong to the lower class. Without exception, they bear the socially imposed burden of being Black. As is characteristic of lower class neighborhoods, regardless of race, the housing is substandard, a large number of youth gangs are active in the area. The incidence of crime is high and results in a great deal of police activity. In addition, a preponderance of families are welfare recipients who for a variety of legitimate reasons find it difficult or impossible to find adequately remunerative employment. A large percentage of the children come from broken homes where the mother has the impossible task of being both mother and father to them. By and large, these

children are free to wander farther from home at an age when middle class children are still confined to the backyard. In many cases, children, particularly girls, shoulder adult responsibilities around the home. They cook, clean the house, do the laundry and ironing, do the shopping, and take care of younger brothers and sisters. The children are wise in the way of the street and have developed survival techniques unknown to their middle class counterparts. Outbreaks of violence, in varying forms and degrees, are ever present possibilities. These children, therefore, are reared in what is euphemistically described as a depressed area. In response to situations indigenous to this area, they develop an organized body of overt and covert culture patterns. Out of their experiences of living in an inner-city area, and out of their reactions to them, the children develop an attitude-value system which forms the springboard and explanation of much of their behavior.

It must never be forgotten that these children, existentially immersed in their situation as they are, possess an ontological permanence and worth. They are images of God and, as incarnate beings, are constituted in an indivisible unity of body and soul. As such they are persons. Their subjectivity is the realm of those mysteries inseparably linked to their very being, and as centers of subjectivity they are unique and irreplaceable. From the vantage point of their subjectivity, they view their existence and the world about them. There is nobody quite as interesting to them as they themselves are, and their destinies are the most important of all destinies. Within each of these children there stirs a tangle of hopes, fears, desires, anticipations, expectations, and feelings not only of frustration and distrust but also of alienation and isolation. In common with all human beings, it is

beyond the power of these children to share, transmit, or communicate their subjectivity as subjectivity, which is to say that there is no way for them to render exterior the interiority of their subjectivity as they have lived and are living it. The interiority of their subjectivity has its source in the depths of their being, and its specificity derives from the cultural milieu of which they are a part.

When they come to school, their quality as persons and their subjectivity are not deposited outside the school door and picked up at the end of the school day. On the contrary, they bring them right with them, and as unique subjects and centers of subjectivity they undergo the process of being reduced to objects. Placed on the procrustean bed of science and common judgement, they are stretched or hacked into conformity with the objectivity of intellectual knowledge. Their uniqueness as persons and centers of subjectivity can thus be obliterated in the commonality of objectivity.

This is not to suggest that children are the victims of an educational conspiracy bent on reducing them to objects. As subjects, they must to some degree be treated as objects if the instructional aims of education are to be realized in them. This is analogous to the person who is ill. His body is part of his very person and subjectivity. But in order to cure his illness, the doctor treats his body not as his body but as an impersonal object capable of being cured by the impersonal and objective techniques of medical science. In like manner, children, as persons and centers of subjectivity, whose intellectual capacities stand in need of development, will necessarily be treated as objects according to the objectivity and universality of sound instruction. What must be recognized and borne in mind at all times is that

ontologically the educand is a person and a subject.

The conceptualized objectisation of the person in education becomes a realized danger when it is held to be an adequate representation of his ontological reality. For then the person is not really a subject known as object but is, rather, an object known as object.

Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that the educator, be he teacher or administrator, is a person. Like the student, he cannot know himself in his subjectivity as such through knowledge by mode of conceptualization. Just as it is with the educand, so also is it with him: he is to himself the most interesting person in the world and his destiny the most important of all destinies. The net realization should be that, conceptually unknowable in their subjectivity as such, he, the rest of the staff, and the student body are mutually engaged in the task of education which, to a degree difficult to determine, necessitates the objectisation of the person in education. However, a constant awareness of the subjectivity of the person in education is the guarantee against the danger of his reduction to an ontological object.

How, then, does the person in education attain not only a knowledge but a seizure of the subjectivity of both himself and others? Marcel would reply that this is done through love, faith, and hope.

The teacher who love, believes in, and hopes in his students says to them, "I freely make a donation of my being to each of you. And because I love you, I affirm that there is in each of you something of inestimable worth and value. My love for you is not a maudlin, sentimental, and emotional concern for you in your condition of need. On the contrary, my love, as constituted by the free donation of my being, is directed to that in each of you which is

of value beyond measure. Nor is my love conditional. I believe in each of you. In so doing, I freely and unconditionally place my trust in you and secure it with a pledge of what I have and what I am. I am sure that you will not betray my trust. I hope in each of you and my hope is directed to the integrity of your being." Like love, faith, and hope, these affirmations of the teacher are indissolubly linked together; one cannot be made without the positing of the other two. These affirmations are not statements verbally proclaimed to the students. They are lived expressions surging up from within the depths of the teacher's being, are expressions lived deeply within his subjectivity, and are evinced in his commitment, presence, and availability.

In affirming his love of, faith in, and hope in his students, the teacher realizes that he is gambling, that he is making a bet that can be lost. He knows full well that his love can be a love rejected, his faith a faith betrayed, and his hope a hope unrealized. But even though it should happen that some or all of his students refuse his love, faith, and hope by their actions, he does not cease loving them, believing in them, and hoping in them. His love, faith, and hope are not directed to their actions but to their beings from which their actions spring. And inasmuch as their very beings are images of God, loving, believing and hoping in them is to do so in God.

The commitment of the teacher is not to his students as objects or a collection of "hims." It is, rather, to them as an ensemble of "thou's." His commitment is a response to the appeal each human being somehow makes to be loved, believed in, and hoped in. In the making of this commitment to his students, the teacher is willing to run the risk of hardship, trial, and difficulty. This calls for courage, loyalty, and service. The teacher as a

person of engagement is a person with strength of will. He does not reckon with possibilities.

> To will is to refuse to ask the question of possibility, or at least to treat it as primary. In this sense volition implies the question of a judgement incontestably demonstrated (for when I say "this or that is necessary," I do not ask myself whether this or that can be). To will means in some way to place ourselves beyond the point at which we can distinguish the possible from the impossible.[1]

The commitment of the teacher, therefore, reveals a conviction that adverse educational situations which both affect and arise from the student can be changed. Consequently, the committed teacher is a determined teacher, determined to affect those educational and personal changes so essential to his students. This calls for arduous work, non-mediocrity, and often heroic virtue. As a person delivering himself to the "thou" of each of his students, the teacher is not only engaged in their educational advancement but also in their fulfillment as persons. The committed teacher is a person of concern. But his concern is not that of an ego-centric individual who is interested only in his own comfort and well-being and who walls himself off from the life of his students. He is actively engaged in working for the betterment of the "thou" of each of them. Through commitment he makes manifest his love, faith, and hope and in so doing transcends the world of objective existence and enters into the realm of being.

The committed teacher whose very commitment gives evidence of his love, faith, and hope, is also a person of availability. With all the resources at

---

[1]Gabriel Marcel, Metaphysical Journal, p. 184.

his command, he responds to appeals from his students for help, sympathy, empathy, and understanding. He does not regard their questions, whatever they may be, as challenges to his wisdom and competency but as calls for help. He is sensitive to the overt behavior that indicates difficulty or turmoil within the impenetrable barrier of a student's subjectivity. He is quick to respond to appeals for empathy and understanding. The defects of human conduct, no matter how serious, are not occasions for any lessening of the teacher's love, faith, and hope. In a very true sense, these defects are appeals for help to which he responds with all the resources of his being. In availability, the teachers demonstrates that he does indeed truly have love, faith, and hope for his students. Through responsive disponsibility, the teacher attains not only a knowledge but also a seizure of both his and their subjectivity. And the knowledge achieved is knowledge by mode of love, faith, and hope.

Through the hetero-centricity of commitment and availability he transcends the ego-centrism which renders a person blind not only to himself but also to others.

The love, faith, and hope of the teacher is made manifest by his presence. He is not present to them in the sense in which, for example, a chair is present to his students as though they were an assemblage of objects or a collection of "him's." His presence, on the contrary, is the presence of himself as an "I" to the "thou" of each of them. When he is instructing them, he conveys the impression that he is really "with" them, and not imparting knowledge in a manner that is detached, impersonal, and objective. He further evinces his presence by such things as a friendly smile, a warm

gesture, a sense of humor, and the ability to laugh with, not at, his students. The teacher of presence is quick to praise, slow to censure; shows pleasure with their progress and is patient if it is slow in coming. His presence is both an opening of himself to his students and a welcoming invitation to them to be "with" him in the educational situation in which they find themselves.

Thus far, we have spoken of the love, faith, and hope of the teacher. What about the students? Can the teacher bring forth the love, faith, and hope of which they, as incarnate beings and images of God, are capable? The answer is a conditioned yes. Love, faith, and hope cannot be taught for the reason that their intellectualization destroys them as lived expressions of incarnate being. However, as revealed attitudes of the teacher, they can be caught. The love, faith, and hope that a teacher has for his students are exhibited in the concrete activities of his commitment, availability, and presence. Students are very perceptive. It does not take long to realize that a teacher likes them, trusts them, and has hope in them. Whether or not the implications of these perceptions, are applied to themselves so as to become persons of love, faith, and hope depends on the freedom of choice that is theirs. The hetero-centric creation of themselves as persons of love, faith, and hope is a decisive option only they, as individuals, can exercise. The teacher who gives his love, faith, and hope to his students and manifests it in concrete action is offering aids to them to create themselves as persons and to come to a knowledge and grasp of their subjectivity and that of others. These aids (love, faith, and hope as shown by commitment, availability, and presence) are freely offered and may be just as freely accepted or rejected

by the students. In this connection, the overriding character of these revealed attitudes of the teacher is that they are appeals sent out to the "thou" of each of his students to freely embrace faith, love, and hope and thus participate in being and transcend the world of objectivity.

What has just been said of the teacher can be said, mutatis mutandis, of the administrator in his relations with his staff, the students, parents, and the community. By his lived faith, hope, and love and their embodiment in commitment, availability, and presence, he in turn is appealing to them to create themselves and to contribute to the creations of others as persons of love, faith, and hope.

Perhaps someone will object that this Marcellian view of love, faith, and hope, as applied to the schools, is an ideal which can never be achieved. In a sense, this objection has some merit. Love, faith, and hope will never be perfectly realized in this life. But the objection, as stated, seems to imply the assumption that because they cannot be perfectly realized in the here and now, the concrete approaches to subjectivity and being of love, faith, and hope have no place in the school. If that is true, neither do the attempts at intellectual development since they would be involved in the same assumption. In our condition as finite, imperfect, and incarnate beings, there will always be a conflict carried on in the very depths of our being between love and hatred, faith and betrayal, hope and despair. In whatever shape, degree, or form, and in our present existence, we shall at all times be subject to the fall and rise, the victories and defeats, the sorrows and joys that ensue in the never ending and interior struggle between faith, hope, love, and their negative correlatives. But we are creatures capable not only

of knowledge but also, and more importantly, of love, faith, and hope. If they be our destiny, as images of God, the school can do no less than to incorporate them within itself. Thus, the school would be not only a community in communication but also a community in communion.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Marcel, Gabriel, Homo Viator. Translated by Emma Crawford. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951.

Marcel, Gabriel, ed. Fresh Hope for the World. Translated by Helen Hardinge. London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1960.

Marcel, Gabriel, The Mystery of Being. Vol. II: Faith and Reality. Translated by G. S. Fraser. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960.

Marcel, Gabriel, The Mystery of Being. Vol. I: Reflection and Mystery. Translated by G. S. Fraser. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1960.

Marcel, Gabriel. Three Plays: A Man of God, Ariadne, The Funeral Pyre. The first translated by Marjorie Gabain; the last two Rosalind Heywood. London: Secker and Warburg, 1952.

Marcel, Gabriel. Man Against Mass Society. Translated by G. S. Fraser. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965.

Marcel, Gabriel. Metaphysical Journal. Translated by Bernard Wall: Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1952.

Marcel, Gabriel. Being and Having. Translated by Katherine Farrer. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1965.

Marcel, Gabriel. Philosophical Fragments and The Philosopher and Peace. Translated by Lionel A. Blain. Notre Dame, Indiana: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1965.

Marcel, Gabriel. The Philosophy of Existence. Translated by Manya Harari. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.

Secondary Sources

Arnstine, Donald. Philosophy of Education: Learning and Schooling. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967.

Brubacher, John S. Modern Philosophies of Education. Fourth edition. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969.

Burns, Hobert W., Brauner, Charles J. eds. Philosophy of Education: Essays and Commentaries. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1962.

Butler, J. Donald. Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion. Third edition. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968.

Cain, Seymour. Gabriel Marcel. London: Bowes and Bowes, 1963.

Collins, James. A History of Modern European Philosophy. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1954.

Collins, James. The Existentialists. Chicago: Henry Regnary Company, 1952.

Copleston, Frederick. Contemporary Philosophy. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1956.

Frick, Carolus. Logica. Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder and Company, 1926.

Frick, Carolus. Ontologia. Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder and Company, 1924.

Gallagher, Kenneth T. The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. New York: Fordham University Press, 1962.

Gilson, Etienne. Being and Some Philosophers. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952.

Gilson, Etienne. Medieval Universalism and Its Present Value. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1937.

Gilson, Etienne. The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.

Gutmann, James. Philosophy A to Z. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, Inc., 1963.

Harper, Ralph. "Significance of Existence and Recognition for Education." Modern Philosophies and Education. Fifty Fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I. Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1955.

Hontheim, Josephus. Theodicea. Friburgi Brisgoviae: Herder and Company, 1926.

Husserl, Edmund. The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964.

Husserl, Edmund. The Idea of Phenomenology. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964.

Joly, Ralph P. The Human Person in a Philosophy of Education. The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1965.

Kaufmann, Walter, ed. Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre. New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1956.

Luijpen, William A. Phenomenology and Metaphysics. Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1965.

McCormick, John F. Scholastic Metaphysics. Vol. II: Natural Theology. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1931.

McKeon, Richard, ed. The Basic Works of Aristotle. Oxford Trans. New York: Random House, 1941.

Micoli, Vincent P. Ascent to Being, Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion. New York: Desclee Company, 1965.

Mihalich, Joseph C. Existentialism and Thomism. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960.

Morris, Van Cleve. Existentialism in Education - What It Means. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1966.

Maritain, Jacques. A Preface to Metaphysics. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1948.

Maritain, Jacques. Existence and the Existant. Translated by Lewis Galantiere, and Gerald B. Phelan. New York: Image Books, 1956.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Beyond Good and Evil. Translated by Marianne Cowan. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. Thus Spoke Zarathustra. Translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.

Pegis, Anton C., ed. Basic Writings of Saint Thomas Aquinas. Vols. I and II. New York: Random House, 1945.

Reinhardt, Kurt F. The Existentialist Revolt. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1960.

Roberts, David E. Existentialism and Religious Belief. New York: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Sanctus Thomas Aquinatis. Summa Theologiae. Matriti: Biblioteca De Auctores Cristianos, 1952.

Saint Augustine. The Confessions of Saint Augustine. Translated by E. Pussey. Mount Vernon: Peter Pauper Press.

Sciacca, Michele Federico. Philosophical Trends in the Contemporary World. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964.

Thonnard, F. J. A Short History of Philosophy. Tournai: Desclee and Company, 1955.

Troisfontaines, Roger. "What Is Existentialism?" Thought, Vol. XXXII, No. 124, Spring 1957.

Whyte, Jr., William H. The Organization Man. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956.

Wilhelmsen, Frederick D. Man's Knowledge of Reality. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1956.

APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Robert W. Feely has been read and approved by members of the Department of Education.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

June 1, 1969
Date

Signature of Adviser