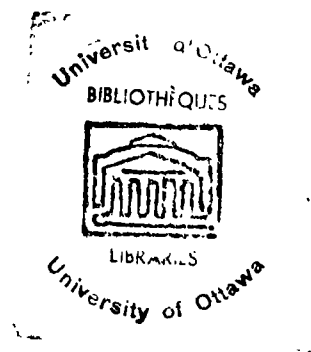


THE PHILOSOPHY OF GABRIEL MARCEL AND
CONTEMPORARY EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION

by Claude D. MacNeil

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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

Claude D. MacNeil was born April 18, 1931, in Florence, Nova Scotia. He received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Assumption University, Windsor, in 1958 and the Master of Education degree from the University of Toronto in 1963.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	page
INTRODUCTION	vi
PART I	
THE MAN AND HIS WORKS	1
I.- BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	3
II.- THE WRITER	9
III.- THE CONTROVERSIAL PHILOSOPHER	18
1. Commentators on Marcel's Philosophy	18
2. Marcel's View of his own Philosophy	27
PART II	
A SYNTHESIS OF MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY	39
<u>Section One</u>	
<u>The Person in Marcel's Philosophy</u>	41
IV.- MAN THE WAYFARER	42
1. The Human Condition	42
2. Transcendence: the Basis of Hope and Salvation	45
V.- THE EGO, THE PERSON AND HUMAN DIGNITY	59
1. Egotry vs. Self-Transcendence	59
2. Disponibilité, Indisponibilité	67
3. Human Dignity	70
4. Human Dignity and Fraternity	73
VI.- CREATIVE FREEDOM	77
VII.- POLARITIES IN EXISTENCE	85
1. Having and Being	85
2. Problem and Mystery	90
3. Primary and Secondary Reflection	95
VIII.- DANGERS AND SAFEGUARDS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING	99
1. Dangers of Degradation	100
2. Salvation for the Person	108

TABLE OF CONTENTS

v

Chapter	page
<u>Section Two</u>	
<u>The person and the "Other"</u>	116
IX.- INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND PARTICIPATION	118
X.- CONCRETE APPROACHES TO BEING	131
1. Fidelity	131
2. Presence	141
3. Love	146
XI.- THE ABSOLUTE THOU AND FAITH	159
<u>Section Three</u>	
XII.- CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY	173
PART III	
CONTEMPORARY EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION AND MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY	183
XIII.- SELF-FULFILLMENT	186
1. The Perceptual Approach	187
2. Marcel's Approach	198
XIV.- DIGNITY, INTEGRITY, AUTONOMY	205
1. The Perceptual Approach	205
2. Marcel's Approach	207
XV.- CONFORMITY AND CREATIVITY	213
1. The Perceptual Approach	213
2. Marcel's Approach	216
XVI.- IDENTIFICATION	223
1. The Perceptual Approach	223
2. Marcel's Approach	226
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	231
BIBLIOGRAPHY	238
ABSTRACT OF <u>The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel and Contemporary Emphasis in Education.</u> .	250

INTRODUCTION

The apparent dilemma of the individual and society has admitted of various proposed solutions both in philosophy and education. In the history of mankind we have seen extremism directed towards both "horns" of this dilemma, proposing an "either-or" solution.

On the one hand, excessive emphasis on the individual led to a denial of the rights of society and resulted in individualism which is an idolatry of the single person. Proponents of this philosophy regarded the individual as the central and, in many cases, the only value in society. If an individual so chooses he may engage or withdraw himself from society. The concept of society in this doctrine was a sum-total of individuals, each an autonomous being and master of his own fate. The resultant state of the situation was one of rugged or rampant individualism or anarchy. This was due to the atomistic or molecular view of society.

On the other hand, excessive emphasis on the State or society led to the denial of basic human rights and presented an abstraction as a center of worship. An individual in such a situation was a product of the State and existed only for the good of the State. This was not voluntary self-sacrifice but enslavement. The resultant state of this situation was collectivism or totalitarianism. This was due

to a collectivist or molar view of society.

Man's search continues for a philosophy of life in which the rights of society and the rights of the individual can be reconciled, a means whereby the person is socialized and society is personalized - a solution which is beyond individualism and beyond collectivism. Christian philosophy has proposed such a reconciliation between the two but this has not been acceptable to all because the concept of the person, society, and the interrelations that exist in these two concepts have not been explained in concrete terms. The solution cannot be found in man himself nor in society itself but in something which transcends both and unites both.

In the field of education, a recent shift in emphasis from the subject matter to the individual is quite evident. This shift could be paralleled to the dichotomy that has existed between the individual and society. In emphasizing the subject matter, educators tended to neglect the uniqueness of the individual with his own needs and interests. The individual is now becoming the prime concern of educators and there is an extensive and intensive consideration given in educational circles to philosophies which are centered on the individual. Thus, the philosophy of Existentialism is becoming prominent since its focal point is the human person existing in a particular situation and this

reflects contemporary emphasis in education.

The present study was undertaken as a result of the tendency on the part of certain American educational commentators to confuse Existentialism with the atheistic and nihilistic doctrines of Jean-Paul Sartre, a pessimistic view of human nature and freedom which does not admit of a valid social doctrine.

Attempts to relate such doctrines to education have failed because the stress on the absolute freedom of the individual in the philosophy of Sartre negated any workable social doctrine and by the same token any substantial contribution to the highly social endeavour of education. Moreover, the generalizations made by these writers do not account for the divergent views held by other existentialists. The plays of Sartre achieved wide acclaim when first published in the United States. The populace became familiar with a brand of philosophy which was labeled Existentialism. Few other existentialist writings were translated and, as a result, Sartre and Existentialism became synonymous. Little consideration was given to religious existentialists because they were considered to be minor representatives of this movement.

The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel was given token acknowledgement as a result of his intense opposition to certain of Sartre's doctrines and also because of his

religious bent. He is perhaps the most outspoken critic of Sartre today. This does not mean that his is a negative philosophy but rather it stresses the positive role of the human person in society. The question arises as to the applicability of Marcel's philosophy to education. It is proposed that Marcel can offer more to education than an excessive emphasis on freedom since he does present a social doctrine which is in direct contrast to that of Sartre and one which presents the other side of the existentialist coin.

In the commentaries on existentialism and education, the philosophy of Marcel is only mentioned in passing, if at all. Sufficient consideration has not been accorded to it. In many articles he is dismissed on the grounds that he is a religious existentialist - as if religion must not be mentioned in connection with education. The fact that Marcel has always addressed himself to unbelievers seems to have been overlooked. The exclusivist and fragmentary character of those existentialist philosophies chosen by these educational writers demands a further consideration of the philosophy of Marcel in the light of possible educational contributions.

It is not the purpose of this study to present the total philosophy of Gabriel Marcel nor to make extensive comparisons between this philosophy and any other philosophies of education or existentialist philosophies. Nor will an

attempt be made to research the origin of Marcel's ideas in the philosophies of those who had a direct influence on him, nor to follow the genesis of his ideas to their present state but rather to expose his thought in its present fruition. The choice of topics will be made on the basis of the researcher's conclusion that a unity can be found in approaching his philosophy from the vantage point of the need for being and a person's relationship to himself, to others and to the Transcendent in his striving for self-fulfillment. No attempt will be made to criticize Marcel's philosophy in the light of Thomistic principles or any other philosophy but to use internal criticism to evaluate it.

Marcel worked out his philosophy at first through and eventually in opposition to Idealism. He was attracted at first by the idea of a transcendental realm beyond life but he could not deny the reality that surrounded him and the fact that he lived, felt, and experienced that reality. He refused to admit that this world was merely a fabrication of his own mind. Such refusal led him toward a concrete philosophy - a philosophy of the person in a particular situation. This was not a transition from Idealism to Empiricism but to a philosophy of a higher order. Transcendence is one of the basic elements in his philosophy - a transcendence which elevates reality and ennobles it. Marcel's philosophy starts from personal experience and

observation. His concrete philosophy is concerned with people and events hic et nunc. He regards the person as one who is irreplaceable and who therefore holds a prominent position in his thought. Who is this person? Whence comes his value, his dignity? How does this person "become"? His philosophy is an attempt to show the value of this person and the importance of his relationship to other persons together with the necessity of transcendence.

A difficulty arises in attempting to determine the central theme or core of Marcel's philosophy. Since he was against every form of "ism" even Marcelism, one cannot find a systematic treatment of ideas in his works. He opposed every attempt to "encapsule the universe" in a certain number of formulas or theses. His philosophy is an open inquiry and gives one the impression of an unfinished symphony. Although the presentation of his ideas is informal and unsystematic, it can be shown that there is a coherence and continuity of thought in his works which add up to a consistently integrated philosophy of the person in his relationship to others. It is proposed that a thematic approach on the above-mentioned concepts can demonstrate this consistency and unity.

Gabriel Marcel has not written a formal treatise on education. His educational thoughts must be culled from his entire philosophical writings. Few existentialists have

attempted to show the implications of their philosophy for education. Attempts have been made, with little success, by commentators who seem to center on the philosophy of Sartre. More significant than the attempts made by these commentators is the presentation made by certain "Third-Force" or Perceptual Psychologists in spelling out their theories and implications for education. One such attempt is found in the 1962 A.S.C.D. Yearbook.¹ This source is particularly valuable because it is written from an existentialist frame of reference and will serve as a means of comparison with Marcel's existential philosophy. Moreover, Maslow, one of the authors of the Yearbook and a chief promoter of the concept of self-fulfillment or self-actualization has declared that "... it is extremely important for psychologists that the existentialists may supply psychology with the underlying philosophy which it now lacks..."² The editor of the Yearbook, Arthur W. Combs, has also expressed the influence of existentialism in developing a perceptual-existential approach to teacher education.³

1 Arthur W. Combs, Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, 256 p.

2 Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, Toronto, D. Van Nostrand, 1962, p. 10.

3 Arthur W. Combs, The Professional Education of Teachers, A Perceptual View of Teacher Preparation, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1965, p. vii.

The chief sources for this study, then, will be the major philosophical works of Marcel, using certain dramatic works to exemplify, concretely, the concepts which will be elaborated. The link with education will be provided by the 1962 A.S.C.D. Yearbook and recent articles depicting the contemporary emphasis in education. These sources will be used in an attempt to show that there is no dichotomy between the person and others in Marcel's philosophy and that his philosophy can make a definite contribution to the contemporary emphasis in education.

Since both the life of Marcel and his philosophy are not as well known in English-speaking America as some of the other existentialists, because some of his works have not as yet been translated into English, Part One of this study will be devoted to the man himself, his mode of communication and the background of his controversial philosophy.

In Part Two, an attempt at synthesis will be made to show the unity of his philosophy using the themes of transcendence, of the person and the person's relations to others. In section one of this Part, Marcel's view of the person will be explored through the concepts of man the wayfarer in need of transcendence; the ego, the person and human dignity; creative freedom; polarities in existence; and dangers and safeguards in the process of becoming. Section two will be concerned with Marcel's social philosophy expressed in the

concepts of intersubjectivity and participation. The concrete approaches to being uniting man to others and to the Absolute Thou are presented as part of this approach to others. A critical evaluation of Marcel's philosophy as a whole will be the substance of section three.

A comparison of Marcel's philosophy with contemporary emphasis in education will constitute Part Three.

PART I

THE MAN AND HIS WORKS

Gabriel Marcel is a contemporary existentialist French philosopher. Although not as well known in America as Jean-Paul Sartre who first came to popular attention through the translation of his plays, Marcel has evolved an existentialist philosophy which is more complete in its applicability to total human development. Marcel's life serves as an authentic example of his philosophical beliefs. His family background is important to the understanding of his philosophical work since his upbringing contributed much to his reflection. Many of the events in his life were so important to him that they merited repetition in several of his works.

The experiences which Marcel wished to communicate demanded the use of a variety of literary forms which in philosophical tradition might be considered foreign since they were not formalized as didactic treatises. His use of these forms contributed, in some part, to the doubt cast upon his works as being philosophical and to his concepts as forming a philosophy.

In this part an attempt will be made to outline the significant events in his life and to obtain an overview of Marcel as both a writer and a philosopher. To this end,

Chapter one will give a short biographical sketch while Chapter two will consider the style and writings of Marcel. Since he is a controversial philosopher, Chapter three will treat of the comments of his commentators in regard to his philosophy as well as his own personal viewpoint.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in Paris in 1889, the son of a diplomat engaged in the Foreign Service of France, he spent many of his childhood years in foreign lands. This nomadic type of life later lent itself to much reflection on lack of stability in families who move from place to place, although at this time it afforded Marcel many opportunities to meet well-known diplomats and leading personalities in the literary world.¹

Marcel was an only child - this disturbed him. In the absence of brothers he created for himself a family of imaginary beings. These characters lived in his mind constantly and it was this type of atmosphere that eventually gave birth to his dramatic characters.² His loneliness had to be populated by others and his characters were drawn from his own experience.

The father's attitude to religion had a profound effect on the early thinking of the son. Marcel's father was born a Roman Catholic but did not practice his faith

¹ Gabriel Marcel, "Regard en Arrière", in Existentialisme Chrétien: Gabriel Marcel, Etienne Gilson Ed., Paris, Plon, 1947, p. 303-304.

² Idem, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 97.

and in early years became an agnostic because he regarded Catholic thought itself as outdated and imbued with superstitions. Marcel did not receive a formal religious education and was convinced that people could be Protestants without conviction because Protestantism implied private judgment, but that no one could remain a Catholic without a great deal of silliness and hypocrisy.³ With maturity, however, came a profound change in this conviction.

The death of his mother affected the sensitive Marcel deeply and the remembrance of her helped him to develop his ideas on the mystery of "presence", which emphasized "the hidden polarity between the seen and the unseen",⁴ which was to play a major role in the development of his philosophy many years later. Although only four years of age at the time of her death, he regarded this as the most decisive experience of his childhood.⁵

... But below the surface, my mother's sudden absence left a scar of anxiety in me that I found absolutely unintelligible. The agnosticism of my immediate life left me inconsolable, and in the small circle I became the center of almost constant attention.⁶

This relationship or connection between agnosticism or lack

3 Gabriel Marcel, Regard en Arrière, p. 301.

4 Ibid., p. 303.

5 Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, p. 96.

6 Ibid., p. 96.

of religious affiliation and inconsolability is stressed in many of Marcel's plays.⁷

A maternal aunt became the guardian and later the step-mother of Marcel. She was a dominating, self-assertive individual, dedicated to the proposition that she must direct all of his reflection. His upbringing was not religious in the strict sense of the term but rather aesthetic and ethical. Although well-intentioned, the admonitions of his aunt left Marcel standing alone in a gloomy "monde casée", to use a favourite descriptive expression of this philosopher.

In his youth he was repelled by the system of education which he was forced to endure. His parents overemphasized the importance of marks and his standing in class.⁸ He felt that there was no distinction made between himself as a person and his scholastic output.⁹ He felt that he was being considered as Marcel the achiever, the producer. Upon reflection he saw this attitude prevalent in society. His exasperation at the school system was reflected in his attitude to the world at this stage of his life. It was a situation:

7 Ibid., p. 6.

8 Ibid., p. 98.

9 Gabriel Marcel, Regard en Arrière, p. 301.

... qu'éveillait au fond de moi le monde à la fois sillonné d'impératifs éthiques et ravagé par un désespoir invincible dans lequel on entendait malgré tout me faire vivre. Monde soumis au plus extraordinaire condominium de la conscience morale et de la mort.¹⁰

Marcel was an outstanding student and extremely sensitive. His physical health was actually affected by the frustration generated by his scholastic milieu. He revolted inwardly against the value system to which he was forced to conform and to the standards by which he was judged. The anxieties which developed in him because of such factors in his childhood environment, drove Marcel in the direction of the religious.¹¹ Although he adhered to no particular sect, he was nonetheless suspicious of every kind of religious synthesis or what he calls "religious esperanto", an "espérantisme religieux".¹²

Marcel was forty years of age when he was officially received into the Catholic church, but his writings exuded a "Catholic" spirit long before this time. His conversion was considered by him as being the fulfillment of his convictions. In reference to this step he comments that his conversion "did not appear as a break but rather as the

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 304.

¹¹ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, p. 99.

¹² Idem, Regard en Arrière, p. 310.

accomplishment and almost the conclusion of thoughts which had been developing in me for more than ten years".¹³ The final step was greatly influenced by Charles Du Bos and by the invitation extended to him by François Mauriac, both personal friends. There was no curtailment of his intellectual freedom after his conversion.

One of the major turning points in Marcel's life came as a result of his activities during World War I. Unable, for reasons of health, to participate in front-line action and equally unable morally to remain outside the conflict, he joined the Red Cross and devoted part of his time to this cause throughout the war. The object of this work was to supply information to relatives of soldiers who were missing in action. He attempted to put himself in the place of his enquirers and from this posture he was able to relate personally and to sympathize with them. This activity afforded him the opportunity for philosophical reflection on the plight of others and led him to the formulation of the concept of intersubjectivity, the posture that should be present in dealing with another human being.

This brief sketch of Marcel's life brings into relief important occasions and happenings which have helped to

¹³ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 64.

determine avenues of his thought. Sensitive to each experience and reflective throughout his whole life, he was able to develop these occurrences into meaningful situations by the "light" which was given to him "by powers it appears presumptuous to wish to name"¹⁴ and to give birth to his concrete existential philosophy. Marcel is a deeply religious man and he looks for hidden meaning in experiences which present themselves. His mode of communicating these reflections, however, is not the didactic treatise of the traditional philosopher but of a method which up to his time may be considered foreign to traditional philosophical expression. This method deserves some explanation.

¹⁴ Gabriel Marcel, in the Foreword to Kenneth T. Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, New York, Fordham University Press, 1962, p. xvi. (Marcel often uses this descriptive mode when referring to God.)

CHAPTER II

THE WRITER

The early conformity endured under the educational system to which he was exposed is in no wise evident in his philosophical writings. He has always rejected the idea of a system. The presentation of his ideas is made in an unsystematic manner which does not, however, rule out a certain coherence of thought which continues through all his works and which, by analysis, issues forth in an integrated philosophy of life. It was out of the question for him to present "a didactic treatise presented in instalments"¹ without betraying a certain fundamental intention which was made explicit in many of his writings. His thought is deeply religious and Pedro Adams finds a coalition of the metaphysical and the religious in all of his writings.² Marcel has been criticized by other writers on this point.

The method used by Marcel has been described as a "winding path".³ This is not to be understood in the sense

¹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 15.

² Pedro Adams, "Marcel: Metaphysician or Moralist", in Philosophy Today, Vol. 10, No. 3/4, Fall 1966, p. 188.

³ Kenneth T. Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, New York, Fordham University Press, 1962, p. 10.

that he goes off in all directions or that he cannot attack a problem directly - there is a specific direction in all of his writings. He has often used the metaphor of a road in describing his philosophical enquiry.

He presents a problem and through a circuitous route arrives at some solution to it but on the way he will bring in many considerations which might possibly arise in the problematic situation. He looks upon his reflections as would "an explorer who sets out to trace a river to its original source".⁴

He also states that "... My method of advance does invariably consist [...] in working my way up from life to thought and then down from thought to life again, so that I may try to throw more light on life".⁵

It is more by design than by chance that many of his ideas are expressed in diary form and in dramatic works. His writings are like a constant dialogue taking place between himself and reality and the innumerable relationships that progressively present themselves. It is an exploration or an adventure in which everything coming into his realm is examined and catalogued - a thought that is

⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 95.

⁵ Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Gateway Edition, Chicago, Henry Regnery, 1960, p. 5.

constantly re-examined in its development.

The fact that Marcel was well-versed in many languages is quite evident from his use of foreign words in his writings when the French language falls short of the idea he wishes to convey - German, English, Greek, and Latin expressions are integral parts of his vocabulary. We might consider him a "purist" in the use of vocabulary. He has given precise meaning to many words which have lost their dynamism and effectiveness for connoting their original concepts.

Expression in three modes is proper to Marcel: philosophical essays and diary form, in dramatic works, and in musical composition. He has continually stressed the importance of these three modes of expression for the understanding of his thought. Van Ewijk makes a mistake in his treatment of Marcel when he makes the following decision: "However we must restrict ourselves to the philosopher and leave the dramatist and the critic out of our consideration."⁶ The connection between his philosophical writings and his dramatic works has been underscored by Marcel when he attempted to outline certain themes which were essential to his philosophical thought:

⁶ Thomas Van Ewijk, Gabriel Marcel, an Introduction, Deus Books, Glen Rock, N.J., Paulist Press, 1965, p. 23.

... la première difficulté [...] consiste en ce que mon oeuvre philosophique ne se laisse pas réellement dissocier de mon théâtre [...] il faut accorder au drame une véritable primauté dans mon oeuvre.⁷

In his Gifford Lectures he states: "For it is in these imaginative works of mine that my thought is to be found in its virgin state, in, as it were its first gushings from the source."⁸

Any study of Marcel would be incomplete without consideration being given to his dramatic works. In fact he makes an appeal to all those who study his works:

In conclusion, I ask those of you who are interested in my work and for the most part know only my philosophical writings to study my dramas, too. For in them, whatever the intrinsic value of my plays may be, lies the unique contribution in which I best recognize myself as I approach the end of my life.⁹

Since this is not the usual mode of conveying philosophical thought, Marcel is insistent in emphasizing the essential contribution of his theatre pieces:

Although traditional philosophers would certainly be unwilling to admit this, it is undeniable that my dramatic work, far from constituting an entirely separate compartment of my life, completes indissolubly my philosophical or, I might say technical writings whether in diary or lecture form. In reality, my dramatic work constitutes a vital element of the research which I might say has been my unique vocation since that distant period when I started to become conscious of my self.¹⁰

⁷ Gabriel Marcel, Présence et Immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 13.

⁸ Idem, The Mystery of Being I, p. 27.

⁹ Idem, Searchings, p. 118.

¹⁰ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 5.

Unaware, at first, of this close relationship, which existed subconsciously in his mind, it was only later that he could see the seeds of his philosophy implanted in his earlier plays:

Just after the first world war, while I was at Sens as a teacher of philosophy, I wrote a large number of plays which seemed to me then to be entirely independent of my philosophical work; [...] It was only later that I understood that this separation was illusory, and that through all the plays I was pursuing the same enquiry that was to become embodied in the philosophical writings ten or fifteen years later.¹¹

One might argue that since Marcel has stated that his ideas are embodied in his philosophical works that these alone suffice to communicate those ideas. What purpose then, does the drama serve?

Now I said even I would be suspicious if I only considered the philosophical side of it (my work). It would look as if I had been building during my whole life a comfortable refuge in lieu of having the necessary courage to come to grips with the tragic and disturbing aspects of concrete existence [...] and it goes without saying that I can better accentuate the possibility of despair, of betrayal and of denial in my plays.¹²

In another of his works Marcel elaborates on the purpose of his plays in which he strives for a transcendence of the immediate which could be applicable to many cases:

¹¹ Ibid., p. 62.

¹² Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, p. 109.

The question is rather to hold up to the spectator a sort of magic mirror in which he finds his own problems, his own difficulties, with the result that through the mediation of the drama itself there will emerge this awareness which, for the most part, remains in us as though benumbed and inarticulate.¹³

Marcel's concrete philosophy is better expressed through the portrayal of concrete situations by characters in his plays. He is convinced that it is in drama and through drama that metaphysical thought grasps and defines itself in concreto, "... Je demeure persuadé que c'est dans le drame et à travers le drame que la pensée métaphysique se saisit elle-même et se définit in concreto."¹⁴ Moreover, he feels that it is impossible to portray concrete experiences in the manner in which he wished to express them without use of the medium of drama:

In fact, many of the experiences were least adapted to any abstract operations that would permit me to translate them into clear, direct thought. The fundamental trait of my theatre works is that I do make this attempt, however, and this perhaps explains why my plays are so difficult to produce. But by the same token they therefore portray real existence more powerfully than any of my philosophical writing ever could. I am sure when it comes to analysis, a critic or a commentator will find himself genuinely more challenged by my plays.¹⁵

¹³ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 107.

¹⁴ Idem, "Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique", appended to Le Monde Cassé, Paris, Desclée, p. 277.

¹⁵ Idem, Searchings, p. 102.

This medium is used to go beyond the abstractions of the intellect:

Il appartient au drama comme à la musique de réaliser par delà la connaissance discursive proprement dite, une conscience supérieure en laquelle notre être se trouve introduit dans son intégrité, et qui transcende les énonciations abstraites dont l'intelligence pure est obligée de se contenter.¹⁶

This reference to drama and music underlines the fundamental role of these media in his life. Seymour Cain has won the approval of Marcel¹⁷ for the following description of his style:

Marcel's philosophical stance is essentially auditory, rather than optical. He is not the spectator who looks for a world of structures that may be clearly and distinctly seen. He listens to and responds to "voices" and "calls" that make up the symphony of being, which for him is ultimately a supra-rational unity of being, which for him is ultimately a supra-rational unity beyond images, words, and concepts. From an early age, long before he knew who he was and where he was going, music furnished him with the embodiment of that realm which can only be heard and not seen, can only be participated in but not demonstrated.¹⁸

The place of the mysterious or mystical language of music in his life and thought has repeatedly been acknowledged by Marcel. Music, for him, was "an unshakable testimony of a deeper reality in which it seemed to me that everything

¹⁶ Idem, Présence et Immortalité, p. 14.

¹⁷ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 82.

¹⁸ Seymour Cain, Gabriel Marcel, London, Bowes and Bowes, 1963, p. 14-15.

fragmentary and unfulfilled on the sensory level would find fulfillment".¹⁹ His transfer from the realm of music to the concrete realm runs in a mystical vein when he states that "... Music appears as the sensuous and at the same time supra-sensuous expression of that intersubjectivity which opens philosophic reflection to the discovery of the thou and us."²⁰

Music, drama, philosophy - all three are avenues of expression for Marcel. Exceptional, indeed, is the person who could follow him along all three paths. The majority of us could only benefit from his works as a dramatist and as a philosopher. As for his musical insights, we can only admire, wonder, and accept the assertions of Marcel.

Marcel has written thirty plays but there are no formal treatises in philosophy. His philosophical theories are contained in essays and lectures which have been compiled and published. He made two attempts at a synthesis of his ideas. The first came when he was invited to deliver the Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen in 1955. This resulted in the publication of the two volume The Mystery of Being.²¹ Marcel was not satisfied with this synthesis because he was always

¹⁹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 21. (Cf. also p. 26)

²⁰ Ibid., p. 50.

²¹ Ibid.

wary of every attempt to "encapsule the universe" in a few concepts. He was quite pleased, however, with the attempt made by Roger Troisfontaines²² to form a synthesis of certain of his ideas. This compendium was published in two volumes. Concerning this book Marcel writes:

... en rédigeant le livre que j'aurais voulu écrire, vous avez fait ce qu'au fond j'aurais dû faire moi-même et vous m'aurez rendu personnellement un très grand service.²³

The second attempt at synthesis came when Marcel delivered a series of lectures at Harvard in 1961 which were published in the book entitled The Existential Background of Human Dignity.²⁴ These lectures concentrated on ideas which were central to his philosophy. These two attempts at synthesis, however, do not replace the individual works themselves for they did not succeed in grasping sufficiently the diversity and scope of his thought. It is questionable if this is possible in a philosophy of this type.

The style of Marcel, however, does not negate the lucidity of his ideas nor his qualifications as a philosopher, but it is a necessary concomitant to his role as a concrete philosopher which will be considered in the following chapter.

²² Roger Troisfontaines, De l'existence à l'être, 2 Vols., Paris, Vrin, 1953.

²³ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁴ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity.

CHAPTER III

THE CONTROVERSIAL PHILOSOPHER

Marcel has expressed his philosophical views in plays as well as speculative treatises. The man as a philosopher expresses himself in both of these media and for this reason much dispute has arisen as to the character of his philosophy and the contributions he has made, if any. It will be necessary to look at some of the opinions and descriptions of his philosophy by certain commentators as well as Marcel's own views on the direction of his thoughts.

1. Commentators on Marcel's Philosophy

The leading existentialist philosophers with the exception of Jean-Paul Sartre have rejected the label "existentialist" because the term has fallen into disrepute through association with undesirable elements. Marcel has not only rejected this term but also any attempt to label his philosophy. This has not prevented certain commentators from calling him "a christian socratic",¹ "a non-conformist

¹ James Collins, "Marcel: Christian Socratic", in Commonweal, issue of August 29, 1958, p. 539.

Catholic philosopher",² "a spiritual realist".³ Heinemann has referred to him as "... a mysterious empiricist who fills the old notion of metaphysics as a science of being with new life by defining metaphysics as "reflection braquée sur un mystère".⁴

Selections from the works of Marcel and the "religious existentialists" are conspicuously absent from the anthology of Kaufmann since he is of the opinion that they "have availed themselves of a specifically modern language to remind us of what their diverse religions have always said."⁵ This imbalance is not found, however, in the anthology of Blackham who considers Marcel as an essential representative of existentialism.⁶ Friedman, as well, has given Marcel a prominent position and has noted that "no mature anthology of existentialism can omit the religious

² Seymour Cain, Gabriel Marcel, London, Bowes and Bowes, 1963, p. 11.

³ Bernard C. Murchland, "Gabriel Marcel--a Spiritual Realist", in Catholic World, Vol. 185, No. 1, 109, issue of August 1957, p. 340.

⁴ F. H. Heinemann, Existentialism and the Modern Predicament, New York, Harper and Row, 1958, p. 136.

⁵ Walter Kaufman, Ed., Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, New York, Meridian Books, 1956, 319 p., on p. 50.

⁶ H. J. Blackham, Ed., Reality, Man and Existence: Essential Works of Existentialism, New York, Bantam Books, 1965, 371 p.

existentialists."⁷

The fact that Christianity is compatible with different types of approaches has been affirmed by Roberts who is of the opinion that existentialism, as a type of philosophy, contains within itself a basic cleavage which can only be bridged by the truth of faith and that Marcel, of all the philosophers he has considered in his book, is perhaps the most prophetic in regard to this more constructive possibility.⁸

Marcel's philosophy is not quite Christian, according to Keen, and he proposes that Marcel, "... although he is a Catholic convert, his philosophy is consistently alien to Thomism and always stops short of being a 'Christian philosophy'".⁹

Marcel's rejection of the term existentialist, in Casserley's¹⁰ opinion, was due to the pressure exerted by the publication of the encyclical Humani Generis. This view is supported by Heinemann, who looks upon Marcel's protest

7 Maurice Friedman, Ed., The Worlds of Existentialism, A Critical Reader, New York, Random House, 1964, 551 p., on p. 11.

8 David E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief, a Galaxy Book, New York, Oxford University Press, 1959, p. 341.

9 Sam Keen, Gabriel Marcel, London, Carey Kingsgate Press, 1966, p. 1.

10 Langmead Casserley, "Gabriel Marcel", in Carl Michalson, Christianity and the Existentialists, New York, Charles Scribners Sons, p. 77.

as being significant since "subjectively it illuminates new difficulties in Marcel's self realization, and objectively it reveals the crisis of Christian Existentialism".¹¹ One could hardly think of Marcel compromising his philosophy for any reason since these are utterances of his own being. To do so would mean to deny his commitment to truth.

There is no doubt in Ricoeur's mind that Marcel's ideas were developed through Christianity: "... Il n'est pas douteux que toute cette pensée est en fait aimantée par le Christianisme, même dans sa phase antérieure à la conversion de l'auteur en 1929,"¹² and he attempts to show the relationship between Revelation and certain concepts of Marcel.

The metaphysical orientation of Marcel's philosophy is regarded by Gallagher¹³ as being basically Augustinian, and Novak¹⁴ indicates that he is antithomistic. This latter view is opposed by Croteau who does not feel that Marcel belongs to that breed of existentialism which was condemned

11 F. H. Heinemann, Op. Cit., p. 153.

12 Paul Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, Paris, Editions du Temps Présent, 1947, p. 270.

13 Kenneth T. Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, New York, Fordham University Press, 1962, p. 13.

14 M. Novak, "Marcel at Harvard", in Commonweal, Vol. 77, issue of Oct. 5, 1962, p. 33.

by the encyclical and does not see any conflict between Marcel's philosophy and Thomism:

Sans vouloir infirmer ici le bien-fondé des inquiétudes exprimées par certains critiques, nous sommes loin toutefois d'admettre une opposition fondamentale entre une pensée concrète et un intellectualisme Thomiste, comme on tend à en faire le reproche à Marcel. Il n'est pas interdit d'y voir, au contraire, deux dimensions complémentaires d'une vision totale de l'être.¹⁵

Wild looks upon him as a clear and penetrating moral philosopher but considers him a peripheral figure to existentialism "whose phenomenological insights are constantly leading him in a realistic direction."¹⁶

The work of Marcel is described by Ostermann as "... a lonely warfare conducted independently against a way of thinking that Jacques Maritain, a great contemporary Catholic philosopher, believes is the greatest threat to the human mind; a generously lively ambition to redirect a tradition of thought with too long a strangle-hold on men's speculative energies."¹⁷

The link with the Church made by Casserley in describing him as "preeminently a Pauline philosopher of

¹⁵ J. Croteau, "Gabriel Marcel - Homme de Communion" in Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa, Vol. 26, issue of Dec. 1956, p. 496.

¹⁶ John Wild, The Challenge of Existentialism, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1955, p. 173.

¹⁷ Robert Ostermann, "Introduction to Gabriel Marcel", in Catholic World, Vol. 177, issue of June 1953, p. 192.

faith, hope and charity; faith in Christ, hope in God, and charity in the church, which is the great creation and inspiration of the spirit of God,"¹⁸ is contrary to Marcel's intention.

Marcel's defense is taken up by Kingston who comments on his insights:

... At the same time, although many have criticized the writings of Gabriel Marcel for being vague and unrelated to the contemporary situation, it is clear that, by a method of contemplation, Marcel sees much more deeply into the core of reality than do many others. It is only through Marcel's or a like penetration into the mysteries of life that human beings can realize the unity and truth of their existence.¹⁹

He modifies this praise, however, when he comments on the omission of the function of reason in Marcel's approach and he fears that "... Marcel's philosophy may appear to be one of extreme impracticability and other-worldliness with little guidance for persons in the everyday activities of human existing."²⁰

The "winding path" of Marcel's philosophy is analyzed by Blackham as a "philosophy of second thoughts, a reflection upon reflection, not raising reflection to a higher degree of

18 J. V. Langmead Casserley, Op. Cit., p. 96.

19 F. Temple Kingston, French Existentialism, A Christian Critique, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1961, xi-221 p., p. xiv.

20 Ibid., p. 196.

abstraction but using reflection to restore concreteness, the unity of living and thinking."²¹

The style and method of Marcel are frustrating to the superficial reader and there is a temptation to disregard his works on this basis. The question arises as to the contribution of Marcel to the field of philosophy. One might be tempted to assume that he is masking the deficiency of his thought in a nebulous fashion of communication. There are contrary opinions on this point.

Ricoeur describes Marcel's philosophy not as a philosophy of freedom but as "... une philosophie de l'âme (ou une philosophie de la présence, une philosophie de la foi, une philosophie de la participation, etc.)" thus indicating the difficulty in classifying Marcel's thought.²² In attempting to compare the philosophy of Marcel with that of Karl Jaspers he chose certain themes.

Once the reader has overcome his initial annoyance at this unconventional mode of presentation, in Cain's opinion, "... he will then find himself in contact with something far richer, deeper, and humanely truer than ordinary didactic treatises in philosophy".²³

21 H. J. Blackham, Six Existentialist Thinkers, New York, Harper and Brothers, 1959, p. 66.

22 Paul Ricoeur, Op. Cit., p. 26.

23 Seymour Cain, Op. Cit., p. 19.

This opinion is not shared by Hawkins who dismisses a treatment of Marcel's philosophy because he (Marcel) "is concerned with the psychological and moral conditions for reaching religious truth, and he is interesting in that way, but he is too securely insulated against the analytic difficulties of academic philosophy to make much contribution to philosophy as a science".²⁴

Marjorie Grene also emphasizes the religious character of Marcel's thought and states that "this is not genuine philosophizing but a two-faced, ambiguous, and not even clever imitation of it".²⁵ She is suspicious of some of Marcel's concepts when she states that "the theory of 'love' and the 'thou' as relief from the ills of the flesh has a thoroughly false ring".²⁶ Marcel only presents "with unctuous sentimentality, a number of generalizing phrases as unconvincing as a very bad sermon on the text 'God is love'".²⁷

Mihalich praises Marcel's philosophy and finds in it "the best hope among contemporary doctrines for a valid

²⁴ D. J. B. Hawkins, Crucial Problems of Modern Philosophy, London, Sheed and Ward, 1957, p. 82.

²⁵ Marjorie Grene, Introduction to Existentialism, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1963, p. 132.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 129.

analysis of what it means to face reality as an individual"²⁸ and he regards it as "a uniquely significant attempt within the existentialist framework to give a concrete explanation of human existence without compromising man or denying God".²⁹

Thoroughly scathing in his critique of Marcel's philosophy, Zuidema feels that it has no message for contemporary man.³⁰ He feels that his criticism of technology is too extreme and that

... his reaction against positivism rests upon the acceptance of a thesis of positivism, with the result that his own rejection of science and technique is so reactionary that unless Marcel reexamines his position, his own philosophy can only be a Sunday philosophy, a philosophy for an elite who need not be concerned with the six days of labor.³¹

In elucidating the philosophy of Marcel, we will be better able to evaluate all of these opinions.

What type of philosophy does Marcel espouse to merit such destructive criticism on the one hand and such high praise on the other? What are his concerns? Along which lines has he directed his thought?

²⁸ Joseph C. Mihalich, Existentialism and Thomism, New York, The Wisdom Library, 1960, p. 33.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

³⁰ S. U. Zuidema, "Gabriel Marcel: A Critique", in Philosophy Today, Vol. 4, No. 4/4, Winter 1960, p. 285.

³¹ Ibid., p. 283.

2. Marcel's View of his own Philosophy

Great stress has been placed by many commentators on the fact that Marcel is a Catholic, but he does not wish his philosophy to be branded or categorized by confessional undertones - for he is not a religious apologist but he wishes his philosophy to have universal appeal. He has always been conscious of writing for "unbelievers":

The fact of belonging to the Catholic Church, or to any church does not - indeed, should not - prevent us from seeking to understand with a lucidity which must never exclude compassion, how life appears to those who are enlightened by no belief of a transcendental nature. It is for this very reason that I have never agreed to be labeled a Catholic philosopher or a Catholic writer, for to accept a label of this kind is, I fear, to pledge oneself, in the name of misdirected proselytizing, to something false, incompatible with that intellectual honesty which has constantly appeared to me as the first duty, not only of the philosopher - which goes without saying - but also of the writer, and by this I mean in particular the novelist or the dramatist.³²

Neither Christianity nor Catholicism form the basis of his philosophical data in the confessional sense, but only as an historical fact. It serves the role of a "fertilizing principle" since it contributes to further development of ideas:

³² Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 113.

... Elle favorise en nous l'éclosion de certaines pensées auxquelles en fait nous n'aurions peut-être pas accédé sans elle. Cette fécondation peut s'accomplir dans ce que j'appellerai des zones péri-chrétiennes, et j'en trouve personnellement la preuve dans ce fait qu'elle s'est produite chez moi-même près de vingt ans avant que j'eusse l'idée même la plus lointaine de me convertir au catholicisme.³³

Marcel describes his own thought as being "Polyphonique par essence, et s'oppose par là radicalement à toutes les idéologies plus ou moins directement issues de la pensée philosophique française du XVIII^e siècle".³⁴ If, however, he has to be labeled he would prefer the term neo-socratic.

... C'est bien sous le signe de Socrate et de Platon que l'auteur tient à placer ce livre, ne serait-ce que pour protester de la façon la plus expresse contre les déplorable confusions auxquelles a donné lieu dans son cas l'affreux vocable d'existentialisme. On lui a parfois demandé, non sans naïveté, quel "isme" il consentirait à substituer à celui-là. Il est trop clair que la pensée qui s'exprime ici s'oriente délibérément contre un "isme" quel qu'il soit. Mais enfin, s'il fallait à tout prix se résigner à chercher une étiquette, c'est celle de néosocratisme ou de socratisme chrétien que, pour des raisons évidentes, l'auteur adopterait en fin de compte.³⁵

Marcel's philosophy is accessible to the professional philosopher and to the man on the street who is concerned with the meaning of life and his own existence. His

³³ Gabriel Marcel, Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique, p. 300.

³⁴ Idem, Présence et Immortalité, p. 14.

³⁵ Idem, Le Mystère de l'Etre, Vol. I, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1951, p. 5.

"neo-socratism" is an invitation for further reflection on the part of everyone. He views the essential function of the philosopher as that of a sower, "... a function which cannot be performed except in the intimacy of the dialogue, inter paucos, and it is plain that in this connection it is to the lesson of Socrates that our thoughts necessarily turn."³⁶

The establishment of a system of philosophy was foreign to Marcel's thoughts. In fact, he abhorred any idea of a system which claimed to have ready-made answers to all the problems of man. His two attempts to make a systematic presentation of his ideas did not succeed since he found that he could not formulate the totality of his philosophy. He would make no claim to a system of his own:

Plus je tentais d'approfondir mon expérience, de déceler le sens assez secret de ces deux mots, plus l'idée d'un certain corps de pensée qui serait mon système, que j'appellerais mon système, me paraissait inacceptable; une certaine prétention à encapsuler l'univers dans un ensemble de formules plus ou moins rigoureusement liées les unes aux autres me semblait dérisoire.³⁷

The emphasis on philosophy as an open enquiry, a research is significant. He does not wish to be imprisoned by a body of doctrines which others may claim to be his philosophy. It is absurd to treat his writings in this

³⁶ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 169.

³⁷ Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 23-24.

fashion:

Il m'est apparu de plus en plus clairement qu'il y avait sans doute quelque chose d'absurde dans une certaine prétention à "encapsuler l'univers" dans un ensemble de formules plus ou moins rigoureusement enchaînées. De là sans doute la gêne incroyable que j'ai toujours éprouvée lorsque des personnes aimables et animées des meilleures intentions m'interrogeaient sur ce qu'elles appelaient ma philosophie. Il suffisait, je crois, qu'on prétendît m'emprisonner dans cette espèce de coquille que je serais censé avoir sécrétée pour qu'elle me parût inhabitable. De plus en plus nettement, par conséquent, la philosophie m'est apparue comme une recherche...³⁸

The concept of the "open enquiry" underscores the difficulty encountered in attempts to synthesize Marcel's philosophy or to pinpoint the essential "hinges". The scorn which Marcel has heaped on so-called air-tight systems is based on the fear that philosophy become self-enclosed and cut off from the actual existent. His brand of philosophy brings into relief the necessity of harmony between philosophy and life - the true relationship between principles and persons.

Concrete philosophy is a rejection of man as a spectator of life and existence and places him in the role of an actor unfolding the drama of his particular "situation", he is a homo particeps not homo spectans. It is an active participation in an existence which must be shared with others. The completion of the drama of life is only made in reference to others and directed to a Transcendent. It is a philosophy

³⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

of the pensée pensante and not of the pensée pensée.³⁹ It is a thought which is kept in constant communication with Being. It is a reflective thought which views what is depersonalized with distrust and aims to restore those basic links to thought which a certain ideology has broken.⁴⁰ Although there were places and times in the past where and when this type of philosophy had blossomed, at the present time it has become devitalized and Marcel looks upon his task as one of revitalizing philosophy and the consideration of the human person.⁴¹

As to the composition of his philosophy, Marcel did not trace the evolution of his ideas nor did he see much benefit in attempting to do this. He is quite definitive in his belief that there is nothing which is less patentable than philosophy, nor more difficult to appropriate, for the seed of an idea planted in a fertile mind can blossom forth into an individual flower. Marcel explains his attitude in the following manner:

39 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 21.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 82-83.

Remarquons en passant qu'il n'y a pas non plus de domaine où il soit moins impossible d'établir avec certitude où sont les emprunts, où sont les influences - où sont au contraire les accords et les convergences spontanées. Ce n'est pas seulement là une difficulté de fait, mais une quasi-impossibilité de droit. Plus une pensée est authentique, moins on peut compter établir sa filiation historique, ou plus exactement repérer les apports historiques à la faveur desquels elle s'est constituée. Une simple phrase fortuitement rencontrée peut être pour un esprit fécond le point d'amorçage ou de cristallisation de tout un ensemble de réflexions infiniment complexes. Et cette très simple observation suffit à faire comprendre pourquoi les mots ma philosophie sont à la rigueur à peu près dénués de sens.⁴²

Credit is given, however, to certain philosophers who had a profound influence in the direction of his thought. He was especially indebted to the American philosophers William James, Josiah Royce and to William Ernest Hocking.⁴³ Negatively, his thought defined itself by way of opposition to contemporary Neo-Hegelians, Bradley in particular, as well as to certain French exponents of Neo-critical philosophy.⁴⁴ Bergson, his teacher, influenced his young mind and he showed his indebtedness to him and to Hocking by dedicating his first published work Journal Métaphysique to both of them.

⁴² Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 24.

⁴³ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Idem, "Regard en Arrière", in Existentialisme Chrétien: Gabriel Marcel, Etienne Gilson, Ed., Paris, Plon, 1947, p. 299.

An attempt could be made to explain all the concerns of Marcel in the light of this *mélange* of influences. We could dissect all aspects of his philosophy to determine the evolution of his thought without regard to the personality of his ideas, the unique expression of the author's own development. In attempting to analyse his ideas by discovery of a little bit of Plato, a trace of Augustine, a whisper of Heidegger, of Hocking, Bergson, or any other philosopher, we tend to destroy the unity of his thought and his creativity in developing his own original reflections from the myriad complexity of such divergent influences. These debts are not to be denied but we must bear in mind that ideas are not inert things but can be transformed and made dynamic by the complexity of background and insight that one brings to them.

Where is Marcel's place, then, in the history of philosophical ideas? It is difficult to place him since he is a unique philosopher. His philosophy is more of a search than a goal. Gilson states that he has a fresh approach and has drawn everything from personal experience and has no desire to be dogmatic or absolute:

Entièrement personnelle et neuve en son esprit, la philosophie de Gabriel Marcel semble tendre spontanément vers une métaphysique de l'acte d'exister sans toutefois y tout à fait parvenir. Par quel scrupule s'arrête-t-elle sur le seuil? Peut-être est-ce simplement que l'au-delà du seuil, on commencerait l'exploitation dialectique d'une expérience qui seule compte pour elle; ne saurait en rien l'intéresser.⁴⁵

Marcel has accepted this description made by Gilson and regards himself as a "philosopher of the threshold" in his philosophical development.⁴⁶

Concerning the orientation of his philosophy Marcel declares that:

Je crois qu'il ne serait pas inexact de dire que ma préoccupation fut dès lors de mettre sur pied une conception excluant tout réification de l'être mais en maintenant l'ontologique en tant que tel. Il s'agissait dès lors de saisir celui-ci sans faire aucunement appel à la catégorie de substance considérée comme profondément suspecte, mes réflexions sur la foi, et plus tard sur la fidélité furent de toute évidence commandées par cette préoccupation majeure.⁴⁷

The concreteness of his philosophy is evident in the following passage:

⁴⁵ Etienne Gilson, "Un Example - Gabriel Marcel", in Existentialisme Chrétien: Gabriel Marcel, p. 7.

⁴⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 71.

⁴⁷ Idem, Regard en Arrière, p. 318.

Peut-être rendrait-on assez exactement compte de ce qui fut ma préoccupation métaphysique centrale et constante en disant qu'il s'agissait pour moi de découvrir comment le sujet, dans sa condition même de sujet, s'articule à une réalité qui cesse dans cette perspective de pouvoir être représentée comme objet sans jamais cesser pour cela d'être à la fois exigée et reconnue comme réalité. De telles investigations n'étaient possibles qu'à condition de dépasser un psychologisme qui se borne à définir et à caractériser des attitudes sans prendre en considération leur visée, leur intentionalité concrète. Ainsi apparaît la convergence absolue du métaphysique et du religieux qui se révèle dès mes premiers écrits.⁴⁸

An important insight into his entire philosophical development is given when Marcel writes that he is concerned with individual human beings and their relationships viewed through the exigence of being.

Lorsque je tente de considérer celui-ci dans son ensemble, je suis forcé de constater qu'il a été dominé par deux préoccupations qui peuvent d'abord sembler contradictoires, et dont l'une s'est d'abord traduite beaucoup plus directement dans mon oeuvre dramatique que dans mes essais spéculatifs, l'autre s'exprimant dans le registre métaphysique, mais restant présente au moins à l'arrière-plan de toutes mes pièces, presque quelles qu'elles soient. Celle-ci, c'est ce que j'appellerai l'exigence de l'être; celle-là, c'est la hantise des êtres saisis dans leur singularité et en même temps atteints dans les mystérieux rapports qui les lient.⁴⁹

The exigence ontologique is posited in opposition to the functionalized world. There is a polarity

⁴⁸ Gabriel Marcel, Regard en Arrière, p. 318.

⁴⁹ Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 192-93.

... entre ce qui m'apparaissait comme donnée dans un monde de plus en plus technicisé, de plus en plus fonctionnalisé d'une part et de l'autre, cette aspiration, cette exigence qui nous porte vers une plénitude, c'est-à-dire de quelque chose qui est totalement réfractaire à ces déterminations fonctionnelles et abstraites...⁵⁰

The emphasis on "beings taken in their individuality" is quite significant since he is concerned with human beings in a concrete situation or, as he has expressed it in another book, "vers la reconnaissance pour ainsi dire conjointe de l'individuel et du transcendant, par opposition à tout idéalisme impersonnel ou immanentiste".⁵¹ The importance of the individual as opposed to man in general is paramount in all the works of Marcel. The emphasis is upon a particular individual in a particular situation rather than general principles which "encompass the universe". He is against the "spirit of abstraction" which was prevalent in traditional philosophies and he considers this obstinate and untiring battle against such a spirit as the dynamic element in his philosophy.⁵² He has centered his entire philosophy around the individual in his "becoming", "... To be men; to continue

⁵⁰ Entretiens Paul Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, p. 35-36.

⁵¹ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1945, p. 182-83.

⁵² Idem, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 4.

to be men. These are the words on which I have concentrated unceasingly for twenty years."⁵³

In this overview of Marcel's life writings and philosophy an attempt was made to show how certain experiences in his life stimulated his reflective powers so that he went beyond or rather through the experience itself to the elaboration of a thought which could be applicable to all men in similar situations. His style is not the rigorously scholarly method of the traditional philosopher but permits him to express his philosophical principles through dramatic creation as well as essays. His philosophy, moreover, is concentrated on the individual person in concrete situations and does not refer to the "man in general". He has made no systematic treatment of ideas and his attempts at synthesis did not satisfy him. His philosophy has received praise in some quarters and condemnation in others. He worked his way from Idealism to a distinctive concrete philosophy.

He views his philosophy as a search, an enquiry and has reacted to attempts to classify it. Since his thought is "polyphonique" it is difficult to present it in a systematic fashion. However, certain themes may serve as hinges on which to center the complexity of his thought. As a result

⁵³ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 169.

of Marcel's emphasis on the individual in his uniqueness and the mysterious bonds which unite him to other individuals, it is proposed that a unity can be developed by concentrating on these themes. An attempt to do this follows.

PART II

A SYNTHESIS OF MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

A thematic approach to the works of Marcel has been regarded by commentators as the only valid portrayal of his concepts because of the particular type of philosophy he espouses and his method of presentation. This approach has been used by Ricoeur,¹ Gallagher,² Miceli,³ and others, each attempting to synthesize his philosophy by using different conceptual emphases in order to evolve a certain unity and center of focus.

Troisfontaines developed certain themes which he found present in Marcel's philosophy, justifying his approach in the following manner:

... En dépit des développements inattendus et des tonalités successives on discerne quelques grands thèmes qui dominent la pensée de Marcel et font l'unité de sa symphonie métaphysique. Même si le "système" doit être exclu, une synthèse doctrinale reste donc possible qui mettrait en valeur, en les éclairant les uns par les autres, les divers aspects de cette philosophie.⁴

1 Paul Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, Philosophie du mystère et philosophie du paradoxe, Paris, Éditions du Temps Présent, 1947, 455 p.

2 Kenneth T. Gallagher, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, New York, Fordham University Press, 1962, xvi-179 p.

3 Vincent Miceli, Ascent to Being, Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion, New York, Desclée, 1965, xviii-218 p.

4 Roger Troisfontaines, De l'existence à l'être, Vol. I, Paris, Vrin, 1953, p. 44.

His thesis is that Marcel is concerned with the journey undertaken by man in passing from mere existence to Being.

Since Marcel has indicated his concern with the consideration of individuals taken in their individuality and the mysterious relationships which bind them, together with the exigence of being, an attempt will be made in this study to show the unity of Marcel's philosophy and dramatic works in synthesizing the above-mentioned concepts. In accordance with this purpose, this part is divided into three sections. Marcel's concern with the person and the exigence of being will be exposed in section one. Man as a social being, called to participation and relationships with others and the absolute thou through concrete approaches are the concerns of section two. In section three an evaluation of Marcel's concrete philosophy will be presented.

Section One

The Person in Marcel's Philosophy

Who am I? Where did I come from? Why am I here? What can I become? Of what value am I? Am I an accident of nature or is there purpose to my existence? Am I pre-determined to become a particular person? How free am I? These are the existential questions posed by man in reflecting on his own being, on his own existence.

Throughout his works Marcel has proposed certain considerations which serve as a basis of response to these questions. The condition of man as a wayfarer on earth, in a particular situation, in need of transcendence, in need of Being, searching for salvation, will be considered in Chapter four. Man in his search for fulfillment, in his development, his "becoming", man's dignity and the call to fraternity is the area of investigation in Chapter five. To become, to develop, to fulfill oneself requires freedom, a certain autonomy. What this freedom is and its use involves will be the subject of Chapter six. In Chapter seven certain polarities of existence demanding a fight and a decision on the part of man will be presented. Certain dangers existing on the road to becoming which tend to dehumanize man are presented in Chapter eight together with Marcel's method of combatting these dangers.

CHAPTER IV

MAN THE WAYFARER

The primacy of the person in the philosophy of Marcel is paramount, but it is a special type of person with whom Marcel is concerned. The person who is considered as an incarnate, finite, striving individual in need of something beyond himself, motivated by an unerring hope.

1. The Human Condition

Marcel's concept of man is that of a wayfarer (homo viator) who is travelling from Existence to Being in a "monde cassée" which grants only glimpses of true Being. It is a dangerous path which he travels but it is a noble venture which he undertakes, for the acceptance of risk is part of the human condition:

... Peut-être un ordre terrestre stable ne peut-il être instauré que si l'homme garde une conscience aigüe de ce qu'on pourrait appeler sa condition itinérante: c'est-à-dire s'il se rappelle perpétuellement qu'il est tenu de se frayer un chemin précaire, à travers les blocs erratiques d'un univers effrondé et qui semble de toutes parts s'échapper à lui-même, vers un monde plus fortement constitué dans l'être, et dont il ne lui est donnée de percevoir ici-bas que les changements et incertains reflects [...]. On ne contestera certes pas que l'affirmation de cet au-delà comporte un risque, le "beau risque" dont parlait le philosophe antique, mais toute la question est de savoir si, en refusant de le courir, on ne s'engage pas dans une voie qui, tôt ou tard, mène à la perdition.¹

¹ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance, Paris, Aubier, 1945, p. 202.

This is a spiritual itinerary, for we are following the path which leads to something above and beyond man - which leads to the pleroma of Being. "... C'est l'âme précisément qui est la voyageuse, c'est de l'âme et d'elle seule qu'il est suprêmement vrai de dire qu'être, c'est être en route."²

To be en route does not imply a nomadism in which one wanders aimlessly. It is more of a pilgrimage toward a definite goal, one which is the fulfillment of hope and without any indication of pessimism or fatalism.

This concept of man's journey is directly opposed to one which claims that man is "flung into existence", without any purpose, that he is a useless passion and that he is condemned to be free. It does not, however, overlook the fact that man has certain limitations. It is sometimes difficult for me to accept the limitations of matter and history - my physical make-up, my parents, my socio-economic status and the day to day annoyances which are unforeseen and unpredictable - nevertheless, these are part of my condition which I must accept and work through.

In stressing the itinerant character of the soul, Marcel does not imply that there can be a real distinction between the soul and the body, for it is the essence of

² Ibid., p. 10.

human existence to be incarnate. It is through the body that we encounter and experience the world. It is the mediator between me and reality. In a sense, I am my body. I cannot think of it as non-existent, for my body is the "existential indubitable" - the touchstone of all existence. The fact of incarnation is the central given of all metaphysics.³ Man is neither a mind accidentally residing in a body nor a body accidentally housing a mind. He is incarnate by his very nature. Everything is bound up in this situation. It is impossible for me to transcend it although I may refuse to recognize it and abstract myself in thought from it.⁴

Not only are we inseparable from our bodies but also from our particular situation. In treating of the individual we must take his particularity into account. Man in general does not exist but only this man in his particular situation, in his particular circumstances. Thus, incarnation and situation are essential modes of my condition. I am inseparable from my particular concrete situation for it is the essence of man to be in a situation.⁵ It is this very particular individual with whom Marcel is concerned in his philosophy:

³ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 19.

⁴ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

... Ce qui existe et ce qui compte, c'est tel individu, c'est l'individu réel que je suis, avec le détail incroyablement minutieux de son expérience, avec toutes les spécifications de l'aventure concrète qu'il lui appartient de vivre, à lui seul et non à tel autre.⁶

Within this incarnate being there is a certain uneasiness, a striving to be fulfilled, a yearning for a plenitude that will satisfy him. This uneasiness is the inner drive for man's wayfaring and he cannot lose this stimulus without becoming immobilized and dying. This nostalgia, disquiet, anxiety is due to the realization of my finiteness and the limitations of my condition. It becomes the basis for the positing of a basic need in man, the need for transcendence - the need to be rescued from my anxiety and perplexity and even from the temptation to despair which is engendered in me by the uncertainty and instability of my human condition.

2. Transcendence: the Basis of Hope and Salvation

The concept of transcendence is the sine qua non of Marcel's whole philosophy. All other concepts which he develops presuppose and build upon this basis. Jeanne Parain-Vial calls this the "central intuition" of Marcel and posits it as the basis for the avoidance of extremes

⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 181.

in his philosophy.

Nous retrouvons, au terme de cette étude, l'intuition centrale de Gabriel Marcel (au sens où selon Bergson une intuition est à l'origine de toute grande philosophie): celle de l'enracinement mystérieux de l'existence dans la transcendance de l'être. Une telle position ontologique explique qu'il soit impossible d'appliquer à Gabriel Marcel une étiquette métaphysique ou politique. Il ne maintient même pas (quoi qu'en dise J. Delhomme dans une étude juste par ailleurs) "le primat de l'existence sur l'essence" tout au plus pourrait-on parler d'une priorité méthodologique, en ce sens qu'il faut partir de l'existence pour découvrir le primat ontologique de l'essence. Il transcende l'opposition de l'empirisme et du rationalisme, du réalisme et de l'idéalisme, de l'objectivisme et du subjectivisme. Dans ces classifications inadéquates se trouvent parfois enfermés les plus grands philosophes pour peu qu'un de leurs disciples ou commentateurs se révèle incapable de pratiquer la réflexion seconde. Celle-ci est pourtant le nerf de l'effort philosophique; c'est elle qui a permis à Gabriel Marcel de dévoiler l'être impliqué dans l'existence, la pensée impliquée dans la réalité donnée, le nous impliqué dans le moi, l'amour impliqué dans la liberté...⁷

Transcendence is basic to my condition as a human being. It is grasped in and through my personal experience. My whole life testifies to this need - I experience things which are beyond my grasp, I am restless because material goods cannot satisfy the inner yearning that I have for fulfillment, I have a sense of a higher calling, in short, my whole existence is "caught up within the poles of transcendence".⁸

⁷ Jeanne Parain-Vial, Gabriel Marcel et les niveaux de l'expérience, (No Place), Editions Seghers, 1966, p. 34.

⁸ Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 55.

This deep "need" is not a predicate which belongs to me or to a few others and not to all my fellow travellers. On the contrary, it must be regarded as an essential element of the general human condition.⁹ Moreover, this need can be and must be experienced by all. That is, there must be a possibility of having an experience of the transcendent, as such, otherwise the word can have no meaning.¹⁰

The need to transcend does not imply the obliteration of experience nor does it merely mean "going beyond" as going beyond in space - approaching, as an explorer does, some area which lies beyond a generally accepted limit. Furthermore, it is not merely "going beyond" in time, i.e., the idea of a project or a sort of moral claim on the future. The concept can be understood in the light of the traditional antithesis between the immanent and the transcendent.¹¹ The essential element is experience. "The urgent inner need for transcendence should never be interpreted as a need to pass beyond all experience whatsoever, for beyond all experience, there is nothing."¹²

9 Ibid., p. 56.

10 Ibid., p. 58-59.

11 Ibid., p. 49.

12 Ibid., p. 59.

This concept sets the optimistic tone in Marcel's philosophy. It is a solution to the crisis which Helmut Kuhn¹³ found in "Existentialism". The crisis in man, according to Kuhn is conceived of as an encounter with "nothingness", as a privation of meaning and reality. It is encountered in despair and anguish. It is the shattering experience of our helplessness from which we are unable to rise. He depicts the crisis of the existentialist as the Christian crisis in caricature: "The Existentialists take the road to Calvary. But arriving there they find the place empty except for two thieves dying on their crosses."¹⁴

The need for transcendence presents itself, above all, as a kind of dissatisfaction. But the converse is not true, i.e. that every dissatisfaction implies a need for transcendence. In order to clarify this distinction, Marcel, as is his wont, gives two concrete examples.¹⁵

In the first case, a young girl marries for money in order to obtain satisfactions of which she feels deprived. The constraints of a life whose development is apparently regarded by the necessity to live at a low level and the

¹³ Helmut Kuhn, Encounter with Nothingness, Hinsdale, Illinois, Henry Regnery, 1949, xxii-168 p.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. xi.

¹⁵ Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being, Vol. I, p. 52-53.

dream of an easier and more luxurious existence set the flimsy foundations for the girl's marriage. Religion and moral convictions might be set aside to achieve this goal and in this case we might speak of a "going beyond". This, however, cannot properly be called transcendence.

In the second case, we consider the dissatisfaction of an individual who is leading a life which is easy-going, full of material possessions, but who wants to give up this type of existence in order to commit himself to some spiritual venture. This case is directly opposed to the dissatisfactions which were mentioned above. It implies a yearning which arises within the individual and which is directed inwards, not outwards. It carries with it a desire for fulfillment which is not automatic but which depends on a number of conditions over which the individual has no control. This is the true sense of transcendence.

Transcendence is the basis of hope and salvation as Marcel states:

But would it not be possible for hope to be another name for the exigence of transcendence or for it to be that exigence itself, in as much as it is the driving force behind man the wayfarer.¹⁶

The creative artist provides the best example of transcendence.¹⁷ He must create even though his physiological

¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 182.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 56.

and psychological needs have not been sufficiently met. Moreover, he must create at a level above himself, a level which passes through lived experience.

Man's finiteness evokes this urgent inner need for being, this need for transcendence. It is the focal point of his life, his direction as a wayfarer:

It is essential to human life not only (what is obvious enough) to orientate itself towards something other than itself, but also to be inwardly conjoined and adapted -- rather as the joints of the skeleton are conjoined and adapted to the other bones -- to that reality transcending the individual life which gives the individual life its point and in a certain sense, even its justification.¹⁸

The uneasiness which man feels in the face of widespread techniques can be overpowering but there is a positive uneasiness which Marcel also stresses in his book L'Homme Problématique which enables us to see these techniques for what they really are and to transcend them in order to arrive at peace.

... L'inquiétude positive, celle qui présente en soi une valeur, c'est la disposition qui nous permet de nous dégager de l'état dans lequel nous enserme la vie quotidienne avec les mille soucis qui finissent par recouvrir les réalités véritables; cette inquiétude-là est un principe de dépassement c'est un chemin que nous avons à gravir pour accéder à la paix véritable, à celle qu'aucune dictature, aucun impérialisme n'a le pouvoir de troubler, car au sens le plus précis la paix n'est pas de ce monde, et il est à croire que de cette paix-là les puissants ne sauraient avoir la moindre notion.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 201-202.

¹⁹ Gabriel Marcel, L'Homme Problématique, Paris, Editions Montaigne, 1935, p. 185-186.

Transcendence is a renunciation of our self-sufficiency and is an appeal to an Absolute Thou into whose hands we entrust our being and "becoming".

The pessimism found in certain other existentialist philosophies is averted by this appeal to the Transcendent and it is in this appeal that hope is injected into the human situation.

... Ce monde qui est le nôtre est structuré de telle manière que je peux trouver autour de moi toutes les raisons de désespérer, de voir dans la mort l'anéantissement et le misérable mot-clé de l'existence incompréhensible dans laquelle j'ai été incompréhensiblement précipité. Mais à une réflexion plus profonde, ce monde apparaît en même temps comme constitué de telle manière que je puisse y prendre conscience du pouvoir qui m'est laissé de refuser ces apparences, et de dénier à la mort cette réalité ultime.²⁰

Marcel feels that philosophies of existence founded on anguish and despair have had their day because they lead to a dead-end street. If they wish to revitalize themselves it will only be by a meditation on hope and joy.²¹

The exigence and affirmation of the transcendent is the basis of all hope. True hope is inconceivable except as an appeal, even implicit, to a transcendence. It cannot be based on our own resources for we ourselves know how weak and helpless we are. There is nothing within man to make him

²⁰ Gabriel Marcel, Présence et Immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 192.

²¹ Idem, L'Homme Problématique, p. 142.

feel that he can, by himself, rise above all circumstances to reach a goal which is beyond him. Any conviction of self-sufficiency is bound to lead to despair and "hope is an act by which the temptation to despair is actively overcome".²²

Hope is therefore something dynamic. It cannot be inert. It is not a listless expectation but is rather the interjection into the unknown of an activity that is rooted in being.

Hope is always situated in the circumstances of some form of captivity. We may feel hemmed-in by our finiteness, our problems may seem unsurmountable, we may even be physically held captive, as prisoners during the war. This feeling of captivity is part of the human condition:

... N'oublions pas en effet que la condition générale de l'homme, là-même où sa vie paraît normale, demeure toujours celle d'un captif, en raison des servitudes de tous ordres qu'il est appelé à subir, ne serait-ce que du fait de son corps, et plus profondément encore en raison de la nuit qui enveloppe son commencement et sa fin.²³

The whole of our human condition can basically be the stage for hope or despair, for despair itself is a form of captivity, it is the highest form of defeatism and fatalism. It is the mark of the person who is closed in, who imprisons himself in

²² Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 142.

²³ Idem, Homo Viator, p. 74.

time. Hope is the remedy of despair, it is its opposite.

Hope is not enclosed, it transcends time.

... Tout nous prépare donc à reconnaître que le désespoir, c'est en un certain sens la conscience du temps comme prison - au lieu que l'espérance se présente comme percée à travers le temps; tout se passe alors comme si le temps, au lieu de se refermer sur la conscience laissait passer quelque chose à travers lui.²⁴

The less we experience life as a captivity, the less will we be able to see hope shining through.

The stake involved in hope cannot be an insignificant one for it involves our whole being, our salvation - "toute espérance est espérance du salut".²⁵ In this perspective, desire could never be hope since to desire pertains to possession, to the realm of having while hope pertains to mystery:

Le désir est par définition égocentrique et tend vers la possession. L'autre n'est alors considéré que par rapport à moi, aux jouissances qu'il est susceptible de me procurer si je suis concupiscent, ou simplement par rapport aux services qu'il pourra me rendre. L'espérance au contraire n'est pas égocentrique: espérer, ai-je écrit dans Homo Viator, c'est toujours espérer pour nous. Disons que l'espérance n'est jamais l'état velléitaire qui peut s'exprimer par un "je voudrais bien que". Elle implique une assurance prophétique qui est réellement son armature et qui empêche l'être de se défaire.²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., p. 68.

²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, Paris, Aubier, 1935, p. 109.

²⁶ Idem, Présence et Immortalité, p. 183.

The prophetic character of hope had already been emphasized in Positions et Approches. We hope against all hope in spite of statistics or cases that might be cited against us:

... On aura beau me citer des exemples, des cas propres à me décourager: par delà toute expérience, toute probabilité, toute statistique j'affirme qu'un certain ordre sera rétabli, que la réalité est avec moi pour vouloir qu'il le soit. Je ne souhaite pas: j'affirme; c'est ce que j'appellerai la résonance prophétique de l'espérance véritable.²⁷

Hope does not claim knowledge of the future. It cannot see what is going to happen but it affirms itself as if it saw. It puts aside all present circumstances with this prophetic assurance because it is in a realm that is not subject to space and time. Since it operates in this realm, it is not interested in techniques for it implies a radical refusal to reckon possibilities - "... on pourrait dire qu'elle se désintéresse en quelque façon du comment".²⁸

The subject of "I hope" cannot be reduced to the ego since the ego is the subject of desire. "I hope" excludes all claims as well as all conditions since it is religious in nature.²⁹ "Elle se présente comme réponse de la créature

²⁷ Gabriel Marcel, "Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique", appended to Le Monde Cassé, Paris, Desclée, p. 279.

²⁸ Idem, Homo Viator, p. 65-66.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

à l'être infini auquel elle a conscience de devoir tout ce qu'elle est et de ne pouvoir sans scandale poser quelque condition que ce soit."³⁰ Hope must be considered as a gift - as a response to a call, but to answer this call man must make himself available (disponible), for availability is the indispensable predisposition to hope.³¹ The freedom of man is not curtailed by his response to this appeal for it is fulfilled in hope. Limitations and freedom are reconciled in this virtue.

Hope implies communion, not egocentrism. "I hope in Thee for us" is our motto - "J'espère en toi pour nous".³² This is the hope which springs from humility and not from pride because it does not reckon possibilities but is sure of success - the hope of a person who is "open" to the transcendent and without this openness there is no hope and there is no life.

... L'espérance est essentiellement, pourrait-on dire, la disponibilité d'une âme assez intimement engagée dans une expérience de communion pour accomplir l'acte transcendant à l'opposition du vouloir et du connaître par lequel elle affirme la pérennité vivante dont cette expérience offre à la fois le gage et les prémices.³³

30 Ibid., p. 60.

31 Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 106.

32 Idem, Homo Viator, p. 77.

33 Ibid., p. 86.

The posture of the man of hope is not the posture of the racetrack devotee. The latter's hope is in the form of desire, the former's is a "sure thing". The man of hope passes beyond all doubt, he is not involved in a gamble but in an affirmation of reliance that is beyond all disappointment. It transcends the realm of the problematic, the realm of probability, the realm of the weighing of objective "facts", the realm of critical thought and yet it is not in the realm of irrationalism. The man of hope is not interested in continuously justifying his position or presenting arguments to convince others. It is a freely chosen participation which, in the last analysis, is its own guarantee.

The dynamism in Marcel's concept of hope has inspired all his works. In accepting the peace prize of the Borsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels in 1964 Marcel stated to the illustrious gathering:

... If there is a concept in my work dominating all others, it is without doubt that of hope, understood as mysterium, a concept, as I have previously stated, that is enlivened as though from within through ardent participation. "I hope for us of you", I have written, and that is still today the only formulation which satisfies me.³⁴

Hoping must not be confused with optimism of any kind. Optimism can vary in degree and in its object. I can be

³⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Philosophical Fragments 1909-1914, Lionel A. Blain, trans., Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1965, p. 19. (This address is not contained in the French edition.)

optimistic about science or technology or I can be optimistic without having any particular cause in mind. Remarks such as "things usually work out" or "I'm sure everything will be alright" indicate that it is by chance or accidentally that a certain result will accrue. The optimist usually speaks from experience of similar circumstances in which "things seemed to have worked out". Hope, on the other hand, leaves nothing to chance, it knows that "things will work out" because it is directed in humility and prayer to an absolute who secures its fulfillment. For it is not a case of hoping that but of hoping in.³⁵

Thus we see that hope is one of Marcel's concrete approaches to Being. We have dealt with it in this section because it gives direction to the rest of the work and sets the mood of heterocentrism and communion which is typical of Marcel's philosophy - a philosophy of the person as homo viator who reflects on his human condition and sees that he is an incarnate being in a particular situation. The difficulties and dissatisfactions generated by his own frailties engenders a longing for fulfillment, for perfection. This fulfillment cannot come from himself and so there is an inner urgent need to appeal to a power who is creative and in whom all being finds completion. This Being is the

35 Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 75.

Hope of man and in Him we find assurance for our lives.
These initial stages which we have considered set the tone
for further treatment of the person in relation to the ego
and the consideration of the basis of the person's dignity.

CHAPTER V

THE EGO, THE PERSON AND HUMAN DIGNITY

In the last chapter we mentioned that hope could not be egocentric and that despair is really the posture of an individual who takes himself as the center of the universe, the "measure of all things" - an attitude of self-sufficiency. In such a point of view other people become echoing amplifiers whose purpose is to enhance and confirm my self-complacency. Marcel calls this type of posture "moral egocentricity".¹ The beginning of this egolatry can be noticed in the young child who picks a bouquet of flowers for his mother and says to her "Look! I picked these, I did it, no-one else." The child wishes to claim for himself complete attention and total approbation. The child identifies himself with the bouquet - it is a global presence excluding all others.

1. Egolatry vs. Self-transcendence

The claiming of possessions offers a universal indication of the emergence of the ego. In the child we can see it in the claiming of a toy which a stranger reaches for. The child jumps up - "That toy is mine, do not touch it!"

¹ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance, Paris, Aubier, 1945, p. 23.

The intention here is one of praise of me because of my possessions, "I am the master - you must recognize me as such." Adults are not dispensed from this type of attitude either, but there is more of an attempt to disguise it. We often use such expressions as "it was nothing", or "that's all right". We assume the attitude of a "poseur" and posing is a form of flattery. Beneath this pretence we can find self-love (using the term in a pejorative sense).

The sense of possession always seems to be present in the egocentric attitude. In the example of the bouquet we had the possession of a virtue, in the example of the toy, the possession of a material thing. This emphasis on possession is very important in Marcel's philosophy. He has concentrated on the expression "nos possessions nous dévorent" - our possessions eat us up. In the same line of thought he makes the distinction between Being and Having - a distinction which is necessary for our understanding of the modes of Being - which will be considered shortly.

The consciousness of existing, of being in the world is tied to this need for approval from others. There seems to be a paradox in man's existence. On the one hand there is this need to surpass others and on the other the need for confirmation and approval. Marcel describes the ego as

"... cette blessure que je porte en moi".² A wound caused by the conflict within me which declares that I am the master of my own fate and yet I am nothing without confirmation from others. This wound is:

... l'expérience écartelante d'une contradiction entre le tout que j'aspire à posséder, à m'annexer, ou même, si absurde que ce soit, à monopoliser - et la conscience obscure de ce rien, de ce néant que je suis malgré tout; car, encore une fois, je ne peux rien affirmer de moi-même qui soit authentiquement moi-même; rien non plus qui soit permanent, rien qui soit à l'abri de la critique et de la durée. D'où ce besoin éperdu de confirmation par le dehors, par l'autre, ce paradoxe en vertu duquel c'est de l'autre et de lui seul qu'en fin de compte le moi le plus centré sur lui-même attend son investiture.³

The ego cannot be considered as a reality, or principle or element which is isolated in a human being. It is like a protective covering for a certain aspect of my existence. It is an emphasis, "... un accent que je confère, non pas, bien entendu, à mon expérience dans sa totalité, mais à telle portion ou tel aspect de cette expérience que j'entends sauvegarder particulièrement contre telle atteinte ou telle infraction possible."⁴

It is a highly sensitive enclosure, "un enclos à vif", an enclosure which hinders the development of authenticity.

² Ibid., p. 19.

³ Ibid., p. 19-20.

⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

It pulls down a blind, so to speak, in front of the mind which prevents us from seeing who we really are; for as soon as we are concerned about the effect that we wish to produce on another person, i.e. praise-seeking, our actions, words, and attitudes lose their integrity.

The basis of egoism lies in the somewhat confused notion that our talents, or attributes, originate within us. Marcel feels that this is a fatal error and that our talents should be regarded as gifts which have been bestowed on us and of which we are merely custodians called upon to develop. The concept of gift is a central one for Marcel:

Peut-être, n'y a-t-il pas d'erreur plus funeste que celle qui consiste à concevoir le moi comme le réduit ou le repaire de l'originalité. [...] Le Meilleur de moi ne m'appartient pas, je n'en suis aucunement propriétaire, mais seulement dépositaire [...] si je les [dons] regarde comme un dépôt que je suis tenu de faire fructifier, c'est-à-dire au fond comme l'expression d'un appel qui m'a été lancé, ou même parfois d'une question qui m'a été posée, je ne songerai pas à m'en enorgueillir et à parader devant autrui, c'est-à-dire, encore une fois, devant moi-même [...]. C'est pure fiction d'imaginer un moi préexistant auquel ils auraient été conférés en vertu d'un certain droit ou en rétribution de mérites préalablement possédés.⁵

The ego must not be confused with self-love. In relating the ego to the self we should rather concentrate on the pejorative content of the word self-consciousness.⁶ The

⁵ Ibid., p. 22-23.

⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 217.

word self-love, in Marcel's vocabulary, connotes truth or an attitude towards one's being which aids man in his journey to Being and is necessary to complete development:

... En ce qui concerne l'amour de soi, il est facile de reconnaître l'opposition absolue qui existe entre un amour idolâtre, qui est un héauto-centrisme, - et une charité envers soi-même qui, bien loin de traiter le soi comme une réalité plénière et se suffisant à elle-même, le regarde comme un simple germe à faire fructifier, ou comme un point d'affleurement possible du spirituel ou même du divin dans le monde. S'aimer soi-même, en ce second sens, ce n'est certes pas se témoigner une complaisance quelconque, c'est se placer envers soi dans la disposition qui permettra d'obtenir de soi la réalisation la plus haute.⁷

Marcel's concept of egoism is exemplified in the character of Aline in his play La Chapelle Ardente.⁸ This is an analysis of bad faith and self-deception which is disguised in a mother's "love" for her dead son. Aline is not a wicked woman but all her acts are motivated by the spirit of possessions. This causes her much personal suffering and she makes dialogue difficult with others. She uses her dead son's memory to enhance her own ego. This is destructive of the development of the person because I can only be conscious of myself as a person under conditions which are essentially social.⁹

⁷ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 65-66.

⁸ Idem, Trois Pièces: Le regard neuf, Le mort de demain, La chapelle ardente, Paris, Plon, 1931.

⁹ Idem, Homo Viator, p. 22.

The self-centered individual is "unopen" to others, he is incapable of truly sympathizing with other people or of imagining their situation. He remains shut up upon himself. He cannot develop as a person unless these shackles are broken. The person, on the other hand accepts a quite different posture.

Marcel does not define the word "person" but posits him in opposition to the "man", "the public", "they", to the "one". This is the anonymous entity that surrounds me and whose opinions I so often mirror and have recourse to. This "one" is often propagated by myself when I use such expressions as "people say", or "everybody knows", or "it cannot be doubted that...". This is the faceless one, who by its very nature is irresponsible.¹⁰ It is like a phantom which affirms itself as absolute and yet is the very opposite of an absolute. It is not an agent or an actor. Most of this time my opinions are only reproductions of this "one", although I am unaware of it. The ideas accepted by my circle of friends, opinions of the newspaper, radio and T.V. are reflected by me, unawares.¹¹

10 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 146.

11 Idem, Homo Viator, p. 25.

The individual is the "one" in a fragmented state, "... c'est l'on à l'état parcellaire..."¹² He is a mere statistical factor, a specimen, a scrap - he is the object of mass communications, of Gallup Polls and merchandising surveys. He is faceless, without eyes, without character.

The characteristics of the person are directly opposed to those of "the one" and "the individual". It is of the essence of the person to confront, to evaluate, to commit and to assume responsibility.¹³ The person "envisages" a situation, he does not merely undergo it. Confrontation implies evaluation and appreciation together with a decision, a personal commitment and the responsibility that goes along with the decision to act. The act is the determining factor in commitment for

... c'est dans l'acte que se réalise le nexus par lequel la personne se conjoint à elle-même; mais il faut ajouter aussitôt qu'elle n'est pas hors de cette conjonction. Un être qui ne serait pas conjoint à lui-même serait au sens strict aliéné - et par là même incapable d'agir.¹⁴

The human act involves the whole person, it is a moral act. The more it is a true act, the less I can reject the responsibility assigned to this act without at the same

12 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 151.

13 Ibid., p. 146-151.

14 Ibid., p. 151.

time rejecting myself, committing spiritual suicide - in rejecting it I excommunicate myself existentially from Being and I am no longer a person. Not every act which I perform will have this irreversible attitude and reflection. But in this respect we cannot speak of a personal act but of a mechanical one. Personal activity is creative of the person but it does not necessarily take place in the intentional or volitional realm.

... Comment ne pas reconnaître que la personne ne se laisse pas concevoir en dehors de l'acte par lequel elle se crée, mais en même temps que cette création se suspend en quelque manière à un ordre qui la dépasse?¹⁵

In contrasting the ego and the person, we cannot conceive of the person as something distinct from the ego, nor is it an element or attribute of the ego - the human person cannot be compartmentalized. I establish myself as a person by assuming responsibility for my acts and recognize the existence of others by showing this belief in my conduct:

... Je m'affirme comme personne dans la mesure où j'assume la responsabilité de ce que je fais et de ce que je dis. Mais devant qui suis-je ou me reconnais-je responsable? Il faut répondre que je le suis conjointement devant moi-même et devant autrui, et que cette conjonction est précisément caractéristique de l'engagement personnel, qu'elle est la marque propre de la personne.¹⁶

¹⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 30.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

2. "Disponibilité, indisponibilité"

The mark proper to the person is, therefore, the capacity for self-transcendence. The ego tends to enclose us by fixing our gaze inwardly whereas the person affirms the other as a being worthy of respect and consideration and for this reason I am "called" to be "open" to him. This openness is ultimately linked to a transcendent, suprapersonal Being in which the person seeks ultimate fulfillment. This "openness" or "availability" or "spiritual handiness" (disponibilité)¹⁷ is an essential characteristic of the person implying the disposition to look upon circumstance as opportunities for growth in our journey from existence to Being. This is in direct opposition to the posture of the ego:

... Disons que le moi comme tel est soumis à une sorte de fascination diffuse qui se localise presque au hasard dans les objets auxquels s'attachent tour à tour le désir et la crainte. Mais c'est précisément à cet état que s'oppose ce que je crois être la caractéristique essentielle de la personne, c'est à dire la disponibilité [...] il désigne bien plutôt une aptitude à se donner à ce qui présente et à se lier par ce don; ou encore à transformer les circonstances en occasions, disons même en faveurs: à collaborer ainsi avec son propre destin en lui conférant sa marque propre.¹⁸

17 Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, p. 201.

18 Idem, Homo Viator, p. 27-28.

The terms "disponibilité" and "indisponibilité" are pregnant with meaning. They echo other interrelated polarities which Marcel has developed in his philosophy - the polarity between being and having, hope and unhope, mystery and problem, subject and object, concrete thought and abstraction, between transcendence and immanence.

The man of indisponibilité is occupied or cluttered up with himself.¹⁹ This preoccupation weights him down so that he is unable to break away from these chains which hold him to the prison of his ego. His anxiety over physical health, his occupation, his reputation, his lack of security hem him in, he is in reality "unavailable" to others - he is that man of "unhope". His life is considered as a possession which he must hoard - his direction is in the realm of "having" rather than "being". It is this attitude which makes the individual opaque and hinders him in his self-knowledge and knowledge of others for "... c'est toujours le moi qui se fait ombre à lui-même, l'opacité venant de ce que le moi s'interpose entre le Je et l'autre".²⁰

The result of such an attitude is one of pessimism which lays the ground work for despair. It can lead to a state of spiritual inertia in which the world is experienced

19 Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 30.

20 Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 91.

as stagnation. It is a death in life, a death anticipated:

... It is plain that the more each one of us takes himself for a center, considering others only in relation to himself, the more the idea of the beyond will be emptied of all meaning.²¹

The man of disponibilité, on the other hand, transcends the realm of "having". He is not burdened by his possessions, nor self-image, and has the capacity to respond to the appeal of others. Marcel compares this man to the creative artist who devotes his whole being to his work! The work to be accomplished is the essence of his vocation which is related to others and to the world.²² It is a spirit of self-sacrifice. But this sacrifice is creative of the person. The same purpose is found in the act of the true hero and martyr. They reach the fulfillment of self in the very act of offering their lives. Fulfillment is reached on a higher level, in a spiritual realm for "... my life infinitely transcends my possible conscious grasp of my life at any given moment."²³ The death of such people is really the apex or summit of their lives. The man of disponibilité transcends the category of death - it is in such a person that sacrifice and freedom are reconciled. In

21 Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1961, p. 141.

22 Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 75.

23 Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, p. 206.

a spirit of self-sacrifice we are truly fulfilled.

The person is not something complete, something to which perfection cannot be added. The person, himself, in any recognition of his state has a desire to rise above himself, to become:

... Elle se saisit moins comme être que comme volonté de dépasser ce que tout ensemble elle est et elle n'est pas, une actualité dans laquelle elle se sent à vrai dire engagée ou impliquée, mais qui ne la satisfait pas: qui n'est pas à la mesure de l'aspiration avec laquelle elle s'identifie. Sa devise n'est pas sum, mais sursum.²⁴

3. Human Dignity

The person is one who transcends the ego and can transcend his whole environment. He is unique in all creation but whence comes this uniqueness, this dignity?

The words "human person" and "human dignity" are evoked today with gay abandon in all areas of life. Do these words have real value or are we witnessing a deterioration of the values which these words signify? Marcel bids us to stop and consider the true meaning of the words "human dignity".

Emphasis on the inherent value of a person has come from many quarters. In some, the dignity of a human being is based on the fact that he is a rational animal, stress

²⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 31.

being placed upon his faculty of understanding and comprehending the intelligible order of the world. This type of rationalism, however, has lost much of its vitality. In other quarters, atheistic and secularist humanisms based on sentimentality or convenience have held sway for a certain period because of their appeal to the emotions of men.

The dignity of man does not persevere in these humanistic doctrines since they lack the principle which is necessary for endurance:

... We cannot succeed in preserving the mysterious principle at the heart of human dignity unless we succeed in making explicit the properly sacred quality peculiar to it, a quality which will appear all the more clearly when we consider the human being in his nudity and weakness - the human being as helpless as the child, the old man, or the pauper.²⁵

Marcel is quite emphatic in his rejection of the humanisms described above for he feels that these in the long run tend to degrade the human being, for, lacking a supernatural base, the humanisms eventually give way to an influx of certain techniques of degradation:

... ces techniques abominables ne peuvent s'exercer que si délibérément on se refuse à regarder l'homme comme étant créé à l'image de Dieu: peut-être même pourrait-on dire tout simplement comme un être créé.²⁶

²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 128.

²⁶ Idem, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 53-54.

The denial by man that he is created leads him to claim a certain autonomy to himself which is proper only to the Deity. This is the type of man exemplified in Sartre's philosophy - a man who makes himself and is only what he makes of himself. In other words, man becomes "the measure of all things". Marcel rejects this formula because it is ambiguous since it does not show in what way man comes to understand himself and judge himself and leads to a moral relativism which is destructive of true humanism.²⁷

Man's essential dignity, then, is based on the fact that he is made in the image of God. This is also the link which unites him with all other men.

... dans le monde que nous connaissons [...] les êtres ne peuvent être effectivement reliés les uns aux autres que parce que dans l'autre dimension ils sont reliés à quelque chose qui les dépasse et qui les comprend en soi.²⁸

Does this mean that unity can only come about when all men recognize that God is the Father of all men? This recognition, according to Marcel, does not have to be explicit. Unbelievers can have a very keen sense of human dignity and show it in their behaviour. For example, those who take an active interest in the oppressed and are not satisfied in defending them only at the verbal level.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 196.

... And in practice this interest does imply the consciousness of a fraternal relationship with those very people who are to be defended. Shall we say that those unbelievers entertain, in spite of everything, a belief in God as a father, a belief which remains concealed under their opinions as free-thinkers.²⁹

4. Human Dignity and Fraternity

The concept of fraternity is most essential to the realization of human dignity. The "secret opposition" which Marcel sees between equality and fraternity will be considered shortly. At this point, however, reference must be made to Marcel's play, Le Dard³⁰ for the conflict between Soreau and Schnee, the principal characters, centers on the essence of human dignity. The heterocentric spirit of fraternity is exemplified first in Werner Schnee's departure from his native Germany to care for a friend, a Jew, who has been maltreated by the Nazis and is dying in Switzerland. It is further characterized by his return to Germany. Rejecting the invitation of safe passage given him by the Nazis provided that he would entertain the populace at a leading Opera House and espouse the Nazi cause, he returns without permission and exposes himself to imprisonment so that he

²⁹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 133.

³⁰ Idem, Le Dard, Paris, Plon, 1938.

may sing for prisoners-of-war and become companions in their suffering. This is the active interest in the oppressed, which Marcel spoke of above.

The restoration of dignity to a person lies in the affirmation of a fraternity. This concept of fraternity is not to be put on the same level as that of the Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité of the French Revolution. True fraternity is opposed to a specious equality. The word equality is presented today more on the grounds of rights than of duties and obligations.

The notion of equality, for Marcel, implies the demand for something and it is basically egocentric. "I am your equal, I am just as good as you." Au fond there is a certain presence of resentment in this self-assertion. There seems to exist "a secret opposition" between this concept and that of fraternity.

Fraternity is essentially centered on the other person - heterocentric. "You are my brother, I recognize and accept you as such." When a person is regarded in this light I am not interested in knowing whether I am or am not his equal. "I can rejoice in the ways in which you are superior to me, in everything good that happens to you. I accept you with all your faults and in all the ways in which we are dissimilar." This spirit of joy is of the order of admiration, not comparison because comparison is foreign to the spirit

of fraternity. For as soon as we reflect to ourselves that "I am just as good as he is", we are presenting a barrier to the creative development implied in this attitude.³¹

Marcel makes the point that it is not human beings which are equal but rights and duties which men must reciprocally recognize, and we are guilty of a tragic error when we pass from what has to do with rights to what has to do with men themselves.³² This egalitarianism leads to the inequalities that are evident in society today. It is only in the spirit of creative fraternity that human dignity is recognized and peace is realized.

... If human dignity can today be fully recognized without our necessarily falling into the old groove of abstract rationalism, it is on condition that we place ourselves in the perspective of fraternity and not of equalitarianism.³³

Throughout his works Marcel has indicated the dangers in the transposition of the notion of equality to human beings and it is wrong for a philosopher to attempt to make this transference. "... To say that human beings are equal is just as unreasonable as to desire their becoming so."³⁴ He

31 Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, p. 154-156.

32 Ibid., p. 120.

33 Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 133.

34 Idem, Philosophical Fragments 1909-1914, Lionel Blain, trans., Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1965, p. 9.

could place all his hope for peace on the notion of fraternity. "... Therefore, let us speak of a brotherly world, where everyone can enjoy finding qualities in his brothers he does not possess himself."³⁵ This brotherly world does imply a certain identity of fundamental rights, i.e. the recognition of rights necessary for social existence.

But is man denying his own freedom in granting these rights to others? Is he acting authentically in so doing? In what does his freedom consist?

³⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

CREATIVE FREEDOM

The concept of freedom is of paramount importance in any existentialist philosophy, it is the keystone of each philosophy. Does man's fulfillment and self-actualization rest in his autonomy as the inventor and master of his own destiny, or does it lie in man's ability to sacrifice his egocentric desires and transcend self to abide in communion with others and the Transcendent Himself? Here we have two opposed concepts by which we might classify atheistic existentialists, on the one hand, and religious existentialists on the other.

According to Sartre, my freedom is a curse and a fateful snare which must be accepted and lived with. For this reason he states that man is "condemned to be free". Freedom in this sense is a defect of man by which he is forced to choose - it is equivalent to choice. We become aware of ourselves as a choice which is in the process of being made. Man's curse is that he has to "go it alone" without any reference point outside of himself. "... In an existential perspective of that kind one would be disposed to define the free man as the rootless man, knowing and

wanting himself as such."¹

For Marcel, negatively, freedom does not consist in the possibility of being able to do what I want to do for there are innumerable instances in a person's life when this desire is frustrated, for interior freedom is independent of external circumstances:

... and we have the support of irrefutable evidence when we say that certain beings in captivity, in conditions, that is, which would involve the reduction to a minimum of what we commonly think of as independence, have nevertheless enjoyed a much deeper experience of their inner freedom than they would have been able to do in what we all call normal life. These considerations would lead us to presume that there is a freedom which is not concerned with doing; after all, the phrase "do what I want to do", is at bottom ambiguous.²

The satisfaction of the capricious desires of a human being does not make him free, it rather makes him a slave of his instincts and emotions. It is in the midst of a spirit of captivity that freedom as well as Transcendence is born. It is not something which is absolute which is given to us, but it is "... a conquest - always partial, always precarious, always challenged".³

¹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 145.

² Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 123.

³ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 146.

The compulsion and strength of inordinate desires may demand a certain battle and the use of freedom to overcome them. My freedom does not consist in submitting myself to every whim but it involves a dynamic role on my part.

... Do I not chiefly, if not exclusively, seem to myself to be free only when I succeed in using my will in opposition to my own desire - provided, of course, that it is not just a question of mere whim, but that the will is embodied in acts which themselves form part of what I call reality?⁴

Freedom, moreover, is not characterized by indeterminism nor fatalism, for it does not consist in the power to make an arbitrary choice for this is the lower rung in the ladder of liberty.

... we must once and for all break with the idea that freedom is essentially liberty of choice - the latter, moreover, being conceived as indetermination. Descartes had already seen this with profound insight. The "liberté d'indifférence" is the lowest degree of freedom, and yet it would seem that choice seems most absolute exactly when the reasons for choosing one way or the other are least strong.⁵

Again, negatively, freedom cannot be thought of in terms of a predicate⁶ or an attribute which somehow belongs to man considered in his essence.

⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 124.

⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

⁶ Ibid.

... The only approach to freedom is through the reflection of a subject on himself. Properly speaking, this reflection allows me to discover - not that I am free, or that freedom is an attribute with which I could be invested - but rather that I must become free - that is, that my freedom must be won. Moreover, we must not fail to note the intimate relationship between the two formulas that I have successively enunciated: I am not, I have to become; I am not free, I have to become free.⁷

This dynamic concept of becoming is the antithesis of the condemned quality of Sartre's freedom. Marcel links freedom with a whole congerie of conditions which support "man the wayfarer" on his journey to Being. It is linked indissolubly with hope, fraternity and grace. Freedom is a "developing" or a "becoming" concept for man and it can form the basis for a philosophy of being:

... le progrès philosophique consiste dans l'ensemble des démarches successives par lesquelles une liberté, qui se saisit d'abord comme simple pouvoir du oui et du non, s'incarne, ou, si l'on veut, se constitue comme puissance réelle en se conférant à elle-même un contenu, au sein duquel elle se découvre et se reconnaît.⁸

Freedom must be at the center of our acts. It is not given to us to be used indiscriminately. It is linked indissolubly with my being. It has a content of intentionality:

⁷ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 87-88.

⁸ Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 40.

... my freedom is not and cannot be something that I observe (constater) as I observe an outward fact; rather it must be something that I decide and that I decide, moreover, without any appeal. It is beyond the power of anyone to reject the decision by which I assert my freedom, and this assertion is ultimately bound up with the consciousness that I have of myself.⁹

There are those who feel that our acts are free in proportion to the stake that is involved in the action. An insignificant stake seems to show the greatest exercise of freedom. Above all, Marcel declares, that "... the free act is essentially a significant Act".¹⁰ It is creative and liberative.¹¹ It helps to make me what I am, whereas the insignificant act has no contribution to make to this sort of creation of myself by myself.¹² This creativity does not necessarily imply action nor skeptical detachment, it is a mode of being. It always implies the idea of being open to others. This openness toward the other will not enslave us for it is founded on love and it is in love that dependence and freedom meet. Freedom is always

... bound up with the act of keeping oneself open to the other, that is to say with being ready to welcome whatever positive contribution the other can make of me, even if this contribution is liable to modify my own position.¹³

9 Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 126.

10 Ibid., p. 130.

11 Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 74.

12 Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 128.

13 Ibid.

Positively speaking, Marcel places freedom in recourse to the Transcendent. "... Un homme ne peut être ou rester libre que dans la mesure où il demeure relié au transcendant."¹⁴ Man's freedom must be an openness and "disposability" with respect to the Transcendent and to others through Him. For the Transcendent is personal for Marcel. The freest man is also the most fraternal and "... the fraternal man is linked to his neighbour, but in such a way that this tie not only does not fetter him, but frees him from himself."¹⁵

The purpose of man's freedom is to use it in the love of others for my instinct tells me that my egocentric designs make me less free. I feel that I cannot be completely self-sufficient but that I depend on others for completion. My freedom is true when it is brought into the correct relationship with the freedom of others.

Freedom is a mystery - it is the very ^rground of the thought which attempts to conceive it. It cannot be objectified. It is above all a gift which I must accept or reject.¹⁶

¹⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 24.

¹⁵ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 147.

¹⁶ Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 135.

... Each one of us is in a position to recognize that his own essence is a gift - that it is not a datum; that he himself is a gift, and that he has no existence at all through himself. On the other hand, however, it is on the basis of that gift that freedom can grow or expand - that freedom which coincides with the trial in the course of which each man will have to make his own decision.¹⁷

Any philosophy worthy of the name must take the concept of freedom as its essential content. Liberty is constituted even by the thought of the person reflecting on it and yet it is not a demonstrandum:

... La liberté ne peut être pensée que par la liberté, elle se crée ou se constitue elle-même en se pensant. Il y a là une sorte de cercle que la réflexion se doit de reconnaître et qui n'a rien de vicieux. La notion d'une liberté, qui se démontrerait elle-même ou qu'on pourrait faire sortir d'un déterminisme dialectique est une pseudo idée dont la réflexion montre qu'elle est contradictoire.¹⁸

The importance of the concept of liberty is further stressed by Marcel's assertion that there is no opposition between a philosophy of being and a philosophy of freedom.¹⁹ We can refuse freedom just as we are able to refuse the gift of life through suicide. This refusal, in itself, is a sign of our freedom.

Freedom as gift is opposed to desire, determinism and indeterminism. It is not something which is owing to

17 Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 194.

18 Idem, Présence et Immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 20.

19 Ibid.

me but something which is bestowed and yet something which must be won.

In the next chapter we shall look at certain polarities in existence which involve the use of man's freedom and which characterize his particular mode of participation in life.

CHAPTER VII

POLARITIES IN EXISTENCE

The recurrence of the twin poles of Being and Having, problem and mystery, primary and secondary reflection, attest to the importance of these concepts in Marcel's philosophy. All three are interrelated and lean on the concept of objectification.

1. Having and Being

"Nos possessions nous dévorent" is the essence of the treatment or "having" considered in Marcel's book Etre et Avoir. It is contrary to the prevalent idea that well-being in the sense of material possessions is the answer to all our woes. This is the illusion which Marcel shatters through his phenomenological analysis of "having". He repeats this idea in his Harvard lectures when he emphasizes the anxiety or tension that builds up in an individual tied to his "possessions". "... In a sense it is true to say that to possess is to be possessed, precisely because possession is not free from a certain anxiety."¹

The anxiety to which Marcel refers is that caused by the fear of loss. Since this something or quid which I

¹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 103.

possess and is subject to the changes and chances which are part of the lot of things, it produces a tension in the sense that this "thing" might be lost or destroyed. "... Il devient donc, ou risque de devenir le centre d'une sorte de tourbillon de craintes, d'anxiété, et par là se traduit précisément la tension qui est essentielle à l'ordre de l'avoir."² This possession is linked to the ego, for when I make the statement "I have such and such a thing" I imply that it is mine and not yours. "... car le j'ai ne peut se poser lui-même que dans sa tension avec un autre sente comme autre"³ so we see the link between "having" and indisponibilité. I attempt to appropriate this object as my exclusive property and attempt to incorporate it into myself in some manner.

... Et cette menace, c'est la prise de l'autre en tant qu'autre, l'autre qui peut être le monde en lui-même, et en face duquel je me sens si douloureusement moi; je serre contre moi cette chose qui va m'être arrachée peut-être, je tente désespérément de me l'incorporer, de former avec elle un complexe unique, indécomposable. Désespérément, vainement...⁴

The spirit of having can invade the realm of being. In objectifying everything we tend to fall into the dangers of utilitarianism. The world becomes, for us, a conglomeration

² Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1935, p. 235.

³ Ibid., p. 234.

⁴ Ibid., p. 236-237.

of objects which we use, people become minerals from which we extract the ore that is beneficial to us - our own bodies, desires and thoughts become things which are really exterior to us. This abstract state prevents us from entering the realm of being. We are contaminated by this state and are not disposed to accept a superior activity which puts us in the realm of true living and creative thought.

But if "having" is capable of invading the realm of being and degrading it, certainly the inverse must also be possible, i.e. that Being can invade the realm of "having" and can enoble it or rather transform it. This is the case when we are vitally and actively involved in a personal creative act.

... Nos possessions nous dévorent, ai-je dit à l'instant; ceci est d'autant plus vrai, chose étrange, que nous sommes plus inertes en face d'objets en eux-mêmes inertes, et d'autant plus faux que nous sommes plus vitalement, plus activement liés à quelque chose qui serait comme la matière même, la matière perpétuellement renouvelée d'une création personnelle (que ce soit le jardin de celui qui le cultive, la ferme de celui qui l'exploite, le piano ou le violon du musicien, le laboratoire du savant). Dans tous ces cas l'avoir tend, pourrait-on dire, non plus à s'apéantir, mais à se sublimer, à se transmuier en être.⁵

Having can be changed into being by a free act, by the realization that what I possess is mine to dispose of and that I am master of what I possess.

⁵ Ibid., p. 241.

In the materialistic world of today the desire to "have" is forced upon us on all sides - we are "the acquisitive society" - techniques of advertising on radio, on T.V. and in the press. It is offered to us as a state of euphoria - the more one has, the better will be his life. This spirit of having, however, does not merely apply to material possessions. We are continuously tempted to possess things - knowledge, even persons. By so doing we hope to gain a certain level of autonomy. This, however, is a false autonomy which leads to alienation and enslavement. This type of autonomy is proper to the realm of having. As opposed to this, Marcel proposes non-autonomous activities which are centered on being, activities in the realm of religion, art and metaphysics.⁶ For, the saint, the artist and the philosopher work in a sphere which transcends all possible possession. Their non-autonomy is rooted in being and such non-autonomy is freedom. In these spheres man is recalled into the presence of mystery, that mystery which is the foundation of his very being and apart from which he is nothingness.⁷

Autonomy, then, is a kind of self-centeredness. It is the opposite to true freedom which is creative and makes

6 Ibid., p. 255.

7 Ibid.

us "disponible" or open to others. "Having" cuts us off or alienates us from ourselves since we become possessed by our possessions. The realm of being is opened to us by transcending this spirit of having. It is really an appeal which Marcel makes to us, much like the appeal of the Evangelical virtue of poverty by which the Christian is inclined to detach himself from material goods. This appeal, above all, refers to interior detachment, not only of material goods but of everything which an individual has a tendency to appropriate as his own. The spirit of poverty also includes the spirit of humility which is an approach to Being.

This tendency toward having is intimately linked with our experience and attitudes. It is absolutely essential that we become aware of the realm of "having" and the realm of "being" and this leads us to another polarity which Marcel has established.

In reflecting on his existence and the reason for it, Marcel makes a profound statement concerning being, that being is or should be necessary. This is the ontological need posed by Marcel. Marcel does not define "being" but describes an approach to it:

... 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.⁸

2. Problem and Mystery

At this point Marcel finds it necessary to posit a distinction which has become classical, the distinction between problem and mystery. If being is necessary, I must ask myself, What is being? and then I must ask myself, Who am I? I who pose this question? Do I myself exist? The Cartesian doubt cannot be used in this case for it tends to objectify me from myself. The "I am" is, for Marcel, a global statement which it is impossible to break down into its component parts. The cogito is the subject of cognition, the "I am" is an ontological question. In posing such questions I cannot consider myself as separate from that which I am considering, therefore we should not look upon this as a problem.

A problem is something which is before me in its entirety, it bars my path, something which I meet.⁹ I can analyse it, break it down into its component parts and,

⁸ Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existentialism, Manya Harari, trans., New York, The Citadel Press, 1964, p. 14.

⁹ Idem, Etre et avoir, p. 145.

hopefully, come up with a solution. A geometric or algebraic problem is an example of this. It is something which lies before me and which I can solve. The essential point here is that the problem does not include myself, it is ob-jectum. I am not really involved in it. The scientist, in his work, is also in the realm of the problematic. His work does not call his being into question, he attempts to find the answer to a problem or a mass of data which is exterior to him. He has the obligation, however, as a person, to transcend the mass of data that is accumulated on other persons and to be cognizant of a higher realm lying beyond objective verification.

This procedure is valid in situations which are well defined especially in the realm of technology. It is not valid, however, when the situation intimately encompasses the questioner himself - this is the realm of mystery.

... Au contraire le mystère est quelque chose où je me trouve engagé, dont l'essence est par conséquent de n'être pas tout entier devant moi. C'est comme si dans cette zone la distinction de l'en moi et du devant moi perdait sa signification.¹⁰

The realm of being is the realm of mystery - "coincidence du mystérieux et de l'ontologique".¹¹

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

The connotation of a possible solution is, moreover, inherent in the idea of a problem. By application of the proper techniques or methods we can arrive at a result which can be verified by other researchers. A mystery, on the other hand, transcends every possible technique.¹² In mystery we cannot say "this is the whole answer" or "I am finished with that problem once and for all". On the contrary, in the realm of being there is an inexhaustible richness of thought - "L'être comme principe d'inexhaustibilité".¹³

The mysterious and the unknowable must not be confused. We have a tendency to consider certain problems as mysteries because the answer is unknowable at the present time. The fact that a cure for cancer is unknown at the present time does not make it a mystery - it is merely an unsolved problem since it is the type of problem to which the concept of a solution can be applied. The area of mystery is so extensive that it cannot be fully comprehended by the limited and involved mind of man:

¹² Ibid., p. 169.

¹³ Ibid., p. 148.

... L'inconnaissable n'est en effet qu'une limite du problématique qui ne peut être actualisée sans contradiction. La reconnaissance du mystère est au contraire un acte essentiellement positif de l'esprit, l'acte positif par excellence et en fonction duquel il se peut que toute positivité se définisse rigoureusement.¹⁴

The central point here is not whether a solution is foreseeable but the fact of objectifiability or non-objectifiability - does the question take in the questioner or not? Am I involved in what I am trying to understand? Can I set myself apart from it? A mystery is a problem that encroaches on its own data. A mystery can be degraded to a problem. By reflection on a mystery we tend to treat it as if it were a problem. The perennial "problem of evil" for example, might be considered as a disorder which I view "from outside" and I might attempt to seek the causes and answers. I am objectifying something in which I am intimately involved and in so doing I put it out of my reach.

... But evil which is only stated or observed is no longer evil which is suffered: in fact it ceases to be evil. In reality, I can only grasp it as evil in the measure in which it touches me - that is to say, in the measure in which I am involved, as one is involved in a law-suit. Being "involved" is the fundamental fact; I cannot leave it out of account except by an unjustifiable fiction, for in doing so I proceed as though I were God, and a God who is an onlooker at that.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁵ Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existentialism, p. 19-20.

Marcel emphasizes the positive value of mystery, and quotes with approval the statement of R. P. Jouve: "... Les mystères ne sont pas des vérités qui nous dépassent, mais des vérités qui nous comprennent."¹⁶ We would not be content with a world in which all mystery is banished. The cold, methodological, impersonal steps of reasoning cannot exile the wonderful, intriguing, challenging, dynamic realm of mystery. This concept is brought to concrete reality in one of Marcel's plays:

Jacques (passionately): To see, to hear, to touch.

Abel: A temptation which the purest part of you is not deceived by. No, you wouldn't be content in the long run with a world from which mystery has been swept away. Man is like that.

Jacques (bitterly): What do you know of man?

Abel: Believe me: knowledge exiles to infinity all that it believes it embraces. Perhaps it is mystery along which reunites. Without mystery, life would be unbreathable.¹⁷

Mystery should not be considered as a lacuna or a void in our knowledge but rather as a certain plenitude. The desire or will to know is transcended rather than satisfied in the involvement in mystery. But if mystery cannot properly be reduced to a problem, cannot be objectified, how

¹⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 205.

¹⁷ Idem, L'Iconoclaste, Paris, Delamain, Boutelleau, 1923, p. 47, as quoted by Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 52.

can we know anything about it?, how can we assert that it exists? Is there a different way of approaching mystery and problem?

3. Primary and Secondary Reflection

Marcel distinguishes two types of thought, which correspond to the problematic and metaproblematic realms respectively. These are primary and secondary reflection.¹⁸

Primary reflection is a problem-solving technique. It is the tool of scientist as well as the spectator who looks upon reality as a totality of objects which, through analysis, will lead to knowledge which is universal but which does not allow for the personal and particular aspects of thought since these are irrelevant to its purposes. The aim of primary reflection is to break down problems into their component parts in order to arrive at a conclusion which is verifiable and objective.

... Primary reflection is therefore forced to take up an attitude of radical detachment, of complete lack of interest, toward the fact that this particular body happens to be mine; primary reflection has to recall the facts that this body has just the same properties, that it is liable to suffer the same disorders, that it is fated in the end to undergo the same destruction, as any other body whatsoever.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 102.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

This scientific attitude attains its purpose, but in the metaphysical realm it is not valid in itself since this mode of thought severs man from himself. Secondary reflection serves to put the individual "back in the picture". It restores unity to experience. "... 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."²⁰ Secondary reflection may also be designated as a pensée pensante in opposition to pensée pensée.²¹ Marcel's concrete philosophy is a philosophy of the pensée pensante - philosophy of open thought.

In regard to reflection on my body, I can take a detached attitude and treat it as a problem but in doing so I omit an essential characteristic. There is a direct connection between myself and my body. I am my body. I can only recover this direct connection or unity through secondary reflection. My body cannot be an object for me. I am "incarnate" - separation is only possible in the realm of objects.²²

²⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

²¹ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 21.

²² Ibid., p. 31.

The "I am" is not something I deduce but it is "... an affirmation which I am, rather than an affirmation which I utter".²³ In this way the dualism between the self which affirms being and the being which is affirmed by it is transcended and knowledge is linked to being.

The great danger in our technocratic society is not in the use of primary reflection or the problematic approach but in its misuse. Primary reflection, as exemplified in the fields of science and technology, has given us the ability to progress in research and invention. It has given us a greater domination over our world and allowed us to control the extremes of natural forces. However, when primary reflection is enthroned and attempts to judge metaproblematic affairs by criteria which are proper only to the realm of objects, then we have a travesty perpetrated on the human being which can destroy all that is sacred in him. When the world and everything in it is regarded as material for the scientist's microscope then science becomes scientism and persons lose their dignity and become mere objects.

Marcel has continuously fought against this type of attitude and for this reason has stressed the "recuperative" character of secondary reflection which is designed to

²³ Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existentialism, p. 18.

restore man to himself. It is power which permits us to put acquisition through an inquisition by which we may rise from having to Being. The twin poles of being and having, problem and mystery are the seeds of a whole philosophy in themselves.

Man's vocation is to remain in the realm of being, to remain a person. It is not an easy task for there are certain forces at work in the world which, more and more, detract him from this vocation and attempt to depersonalize and degrade him. He must be aware of the techniques of degradation and a method of combatting them. These considerations will be made in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

DANGERS AND SAFEGUARDS IN THE PROCESS OF "BECOMING"

Examples of the exploitation of individuals throughout the history of mankind are legion, but never before has it been possible to exploit so many people, the world over, almost instantaneously. The media of communication have made this possible. We must also look on the positive side and consider that the possibility of reaching so many people can also be a blessing, but this fact, nevertheless, does pose particular dangers for the person and the necessity of safeguards becomes evident.

The concept of the "global village" can be converted to the concept of the "mass" - an abstraction which is the epitome of impersonalization and inability for self-reflection. It involves a process of depersonalization which eventually makes of man a robot and denies the fact of his personal existence and the rights which adhere to every human being. Techniques are employed to degrade and seduce him - techniques of manipulation which can be so subtle as to command assent without reflection. Some of the effects of these techniques and proposed remedies will be considered in this chapter.

1. Dangers of Degradation

Marcel has described his philosophy as "... une lutte opiniâtre menée sans relâche contre l'esprit d'abstraction".¹ This is not a condemnation of the use of abstract concepts but rather of their misuse. Without abstraction it would be impossible for man to think, and reality would be indefinable since we would be bound by vague descriptions. "... L'abstraction considérée en elle-même est une opération mentale à laquelle il est indispensable de procéder pour parvenir à une fin déterminée quelle qu'elle soit."² The spirit of abstraction, however, consists in the substitution of the abstract concept for the concrete reality from which it is abstracted. It is a contempt for the concrete conditions of abstract thinking and a transposition of the posture of imperialism to the mental plane which engenders an attitude of exclusivism and absolutism.³

This reduction to abstraction has its basis in passion and corresponds to a violation of the integrity of reality. The sphere in which the damage is greatest is that in which concepts relating to the human person have been

1 Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 7.

2 Ibid., p. 115.

3 Ibid., p. 115-117.

exalted to the neglect of the person himself. We speak of freedom, hope, democracy, without reference to the individual in whom these concepts are embodied or incarnate. Imbued with this attitude, we depersonalize the person and it is only by an act of reflection, of recollection, that we can pierce this cloud which engulfs the intellect in order to see the concrete reality.

This spirit of abstraction is characteristic of popular democracies and the totalitarian state, in which the individual is regarded as a mere unit of production and is judged in terms of his productivity. Any form of technocracy which does not value human dignity can be guilty of the same error.

... But this spirit of abstraction cannot be separated from a certain lack of love, and by this I mean the inability to treat a human being as a human being, and for this human being the substituting of a certain idea, a certain abstract designation.⁴

This depersonalizing process has been accelerated by an increase in the technical attitude. Marcel has pronounced an anathema on the absolutism generated by this attitude, this state of technocracy - a state in which technology or the spirit of technology is supreme. It would be absurd for anyone to condemn technology itself, for the progress of man has been and will be insolubly linked with it. In what condition would

⁴ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 123.

we be if our machines were destroyed, factories closed and laboratories abandoned? The scientific method and the apparatus of the physical sciences accounted for our advancement in the control of the elements and the betterment of mankind as a whole. Without the means of technology, man would revert to his primitive state in which he had little or no control over disease, death, ability to care for his bodily and mental needs. Nature would be completely uncontrolled. Technology is a good that can never be fully appreciated.

There is a danger, though, that we may tend to look to technology exclusively for the satisfaction of all our needs, for complete control of nature, a danger that technology will become something absolute and that we fall into idolatry. It is something which we cannot set aside but something which must become our slave, not our master. We who are called to dominate technology, are in danger of being dominated by it.

... Je serais fortement enclin à m'exprimer ici comme je l'ai fait au sujet des techniques: c'est une illusion, disais-je de s'imaginer que l'homme, effrayé par les conséquences que peut engendrer le développement de la technique, devrait s'interdire à lui-même l'usage de pouvoirs dont il a reconnu le caractère redoutable. La technique est quelque chose qu'il est désormais tenu de porter, d'assumer sous peine de se nier lui-même. Ce n'est pas un fardeau qu'il peut déposer pour alléger sa marche.⁵

⁵ Gabriel Marcel, L'homme problématique, Paris, Aubier, 1955, p. 60-61.

Marcel has felt compelled to repeat this thought in several of his works because he received severe criticism after the publication of Les hommes contre l'humain. He has been accused of pining for "the good old days" and having a completely negative attitude toward technology. Marcel accepts the contributions made by technology but objects to the passage from the realm of the technical to a kind of idolatry of which technical products become the object. Whenever the technocratic attitude of mind gains strength, so does this evil of depersonalization.⁶

In an age of analysis and technology, certain techniques of degradation are developed by which man can be manipulated and debased. These techniques of degradation may be generally described as methods whereby men are openly or subtly demoralized to a state in which they lose their integrity and are debased to the level of animals or robots. A technique is "... un ensemble de procédés méthodiquement élaborés, et par conséquent susceptibles d'être enseignés et reproduits, dont la mise en oeuvre assure la réalisation de telle fin concrète déterminée".⁷ We can call to mind the atrocities inflicted upon the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps. These atrocities were motivated by the fact that the

6 Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, p. 152.

7 Ibid., p. 63.

Nazis did not recognize the inherent dignity of these people and therefore treated them as rubbish.⁸ The essence of such techniques is to put man in a particular situation in which he loses touch with himself so that he is even able to sincerely accuse himself of acts which he has not committed.⁹ Physical torture by itself could not produce this sincerity but could be evoked by certain psychological manipulations.

Such shocking manipulations are still evident today in war-torn countries, but we need not go to these areas to get our only examples of techniques of degradation. A more subtle and yet an effective technique is that of propaganda. There is a close, but not necessary, kinship between propaganda and the techniques of degradation. At one time propaganda was a method of persuasion, but today we see it being used as a method of mental seduction.¹⁰ Its real purpose is to indoctrinate the minds of men to the point at which they become incapable of individual reaction because their opinions have been manipulated. This process degrades those on whom it is exercised and presupposes, on the part of those who exercise it, a contempt for those on whom it is exercised. It is a spirit of imposture which is

8 Ibid., p. 39.

9 Ibid., p. 20.

10 Ibid., p. 42.

hidden behind the mask of ideals which attract consent but are really emptied of all significance.¹¹ These ideals are embodied in slogans or formulas which will win the support of the masses. Once the support has been solidified, the propagandist will then be able to manipulate these submen and take off the mask to reveal the meaning of the ideals which he has promoted.

The spirit of imposture is not reserved to the realm of political propaganda, but is used in ancillary operations at the level of publicity. All media of communications can be used to seduce men. The materialism of today's society is constantly fed by advertisements in these media which create "needs" and foster the spirit of "having". Products are presented in such a way that I feel I must have them even if I do not need them - this is psychological manipulation. Wrapped-up in desire, I will have difficulty concentrating on the mysteries of life. Lulled in the realm of having, I cannot approach the realm of being.

... Le développement ou l'invasion de la technique ne peut pas ne pas entraîner pour l'homme l'oblitération, l'effacement progressif de ce monde du mystère qui est à la fois celui de la présence et celui de l'espérance.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., p. 55.

¹² Ibid., p. 70.

The materialism of today's society and the "techniques" employed to propagate it are causing the alienation of man from himself and from values which are truly significant. The denial of the sacred character of the individual person has paved the way for these "techniques".

... Il me paraît tout à fait évident qu'en fait les techniques d'avilissement n'ont pu se constituer qu'à partir d'une situation qui comportait la négation radicale - mais non pas d'ailleurs toujours explicite - du caractère sacré que le christianisme attribuait à l'être humain.¹³

This alienation refers to the fact that "... in a world increasingly under the hegemony of technology, the human being is undergoing what might be called an enucleation".¹⁴ This enucleation is brought about by the increasingly complex socialization of life in which an individual's official identity is considered his personality. He is judged by the function which he performs, both vitally and socially. The individual tends to appear both to himself and to others as the sum of functions which have been assigned to him.

... As a result of deep historical causes, which can as yet be understood only in part, he has been led to see himself more and more as a mere assemblage of functions, the hierarchical interrelation of which seems to him questionable or at least subject to conflicting interpretations.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., p. 176-177.

¹⁴ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 163.

¹⁵ Idem, The Philosophy of Existentialism, Manya Harari, trans., New York, The Citadel Press, 1964, p. 10.

The functionalized man can have no intimate details. He is merely a filing card, a statistic, a "cog", a tool, a machine. He becomes part of the "mass" and his humanity is exploited. He is a "scheduled" man - time to eat, a time to sleep, a time for relaxation and pleasure. There is an impression of sadness produced by this picture of the functionalized man. In such a world there is a temptation to despair because the sense of mystery has been lost and he is choked by the oppressing confines of his situation. Since he is a "mass" man, he lacks the power of self-reflection because he has submerged himself in his functions and is unable to heed the call of Being; and yet there is this affirmation in man which says that I am more than what I have, I am more than the information which is given on my identity card - this is not me, not my intimate being. They are only marks which enable others to identify me. I am other than that.

The result of such a functionalized environment is the eventual domination of the most intimate aspects of life by the State. The family, "the cradle of society" will also be conceived in the light of its functions. The interference with life itself can be seen in edicts concerning birth prevention and euthanasia. Life loses its sacral character and human beings take upon themselves the right to manipulate life:

... If we proceed from a completely desacralized, pessimistic view of life we tend to treat life simply as a power we have to control if we are going to minimize its harmful effects. But in effect this pessimistic outlook is a definite component of the technological notion of the world. It leads us to arrogate to itself the right to manipulate life - simply because it has none of those sacral qualities we discover through a theocentric perspective.¹⁶

The technocratic mentality operating within the scientific method can only view the human person as a problem, not a mystery. Man becomes an object to be studied objectively, manipulated, and, if necessary, disposed of, rather than a "presence" to be loved. The spiritual life is considered as biological or chemical reactions that proceed according to definite laws. In the realm of science there are, however, genuine scholars who are always on guard against scientism,¹⁷ and, ^{overcoming} the temptation to interpret all behaviour in terms of chemical reactions, can bridge the gap that has traditionally existed between "the two cultures".

2. Salvation for the Person

What is the solution to this state of affairs in which we are becoming more and more liable to subjugation?

¹⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 49.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 31.

Marcel does not offer a formula but rather sows certain ideas which he hopes will bear fruit.¹⁸

In elaborating the techniques of degradation and the effect that they can have on the human person, Marcel is not claiming to be a prophet, for this is not the role of the philosopher. He is making a logical extension or extrapolation into the future from observations on current situations. He is "discerning" what is actually taking place today and advising us to take note of it and its consequences.

Any attempt at revolution to counter-balance the state of affairs would be contrary to the beliefs of this peace-loving man. Our line of action consists in an inner attitude which finds its expression in deeds according to the line of work in which we find ourselves. We can all, in our proper fields or professions, pursue an untiring struggle for the rights and dignity of man against everything that attempts to trample upon these rights and dignity.¹⁹

It is, first of all, necessary for the individual person to have an awareness of the effect which these techniques have upon man. An awareness which is only possible by a "second reflection". This is his primary task.

¹⁸ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 169.

¹⁹ Idem, Les hommes contre l'humain, p. 185.

Together with this must come the resolve to reform oneself interiorly and to work in our own sphere. But here there is a danger of fatalism or of not recognizing the necessity of this task.

... Ce qui nous est demandé à tous tant que nous sommes, - et là est vraiment ce qu'on pourrait appeler notre secret existentiel, - c'est de découvrir quelle est cette sphère, si réduit soit-elle, où notre action propre peut s'articuler à une course universelle qui est celle de l'esprit de vérité et d'amour dans le monde. L'erreur ou la faute consiste invariablement à vouloir nous persuader que cette sphère n'existe pas et que notre contribution à l'oeuvre qui se poursuit dans le monde ne peut être que nulle. Une erreur plus grave encore consiste à nier cette oeuvre et à nous enfermer dans la conscience nihiliste d'une liberté stérile...²⁰

It would be folly to believe that all men would be of the same mind, therefore, what is the next step in bringing the "good news" to others? "... C'est seulement au sein de groupes restreints et animés d'un esprit d'amour que l'universel peut effectivement prendre corps..."²¹ These groups may be difficult to form since it involves a true aristocracy of spirit. This elite community would embody the most knowledgeable and virtuous in a particular sphere but it would spell the destruction of the spirit which unifies them if they were to shut themselves up in their own little group or sect. They should be "available" to other groups who may

20 Ibid., p. 204.

21 Ibid., p. 202.

be motivated by a different force and from whom they may learn a great deal.²² These small communities can be examples of freedom that is exercised in relation to grace. They may be found in a parish, a profession, a school, an office or even in the local pub. But these groups should also have some communication with other groups of the same mind even outside their own nation.²³

The major effect of the "spirit of technology" is that it desacralizes life and values and generates a demoralizing influence on family life and everything connected with it.²⁴ It is to a restoration of the sacred that we must be converted if we are to survive and protect those approaches to being which help us develop and prevent us from becoming mass men:

... All these considerations lead to a single conclusion: in the technical era the sacral can only reveal itself on condition we are converted. [...] Conversion is first of all the movement by which the consciousness turns away from the oppressive and distressing spectacle that the technocratic view of the world offers, or - and this amounts to the same thing - by which consciousness transcends the obsession with numbers through the numberless. It is the inwardness we regain through an action which is not only free, but in fact is freedom itself.²⁵

22 Ibid., p. 203.

23 Ibid., p. 142.

24 Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, p. 51.

25 Ibid., p. 52-53.

But the masses, the functionalized man, are incapable of regaining this inwardness by themselves. It is therefore the duty of those who can reflect on the world situation to work towards an order which will help as many beings as possible to overcome this subjugation and raise themselves once again to the personal realm.²⁶

The indoctrinated masses in a materialistic society have broken the marriage bond between man and life. They have given themselves over to the "Carpe Diem" philosophy of Epicureanism and seek fulfillment in pleasure of the immediate. When we say that happiness lies in virtue there would be agreement on the part of all. But this agreement would only be due to a misunderstanding or devaluation of these two words by those who have broken this marriage bond. These groups belong to "leper colonies" or "termite colonies" which are at the opposite pole from the "Mystical Body".²⁷

The multiplication of such "leper colonies" is the universal threat which weighs upon human beings today. Any form of technocracy which submerges the individual to a value in terms of productivity "... tends to create communities of lepers, however attractive their outward aspect may be..."²⁸

26 Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, p. 13.

27 Ibid., p. 139.

28 Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 123.

Against this tendency man must fight, but he is not alone - others are also involved in this conflict and it is only through others that ~~can~~ can win the battle.

Society, in its authentic concept, does not exist apart from the persons who compose it. It is a community of persons - a co-participation with other persons. In such a society there is a mutual creativity which is recognized and fostered and those in authority only hold that authority as a primus inter pares, not as dictators for their own ends, but as promoters of the individual and common good. It is in this attitude that the true spirit of obedience can also be emphasized since this type of obedience is fidelity rather than adherence to a command - an obedience which is rendered out of love.

The fundamental condition of the person is to be a wayfarer, an incarnate, striving being in a particular situation, realizing his finiteness and in need of something which lies beyond him, a Transcendence in whom he finds hope, the remedy of despair over his own helplessness. This hope gives dynamism to his life, is religious in nature, and implies a certain communion.

The person, striving for fulfillment, confronts, evaluates, commits himself and assumes responsibility. He creates himself by his intentional acts but is not enclosed as an isolated ego since he finds his road to self-actualization

through the quality of disponibilité. His dignity is based on his sacred quality as a created being - created in the image of God which, therefore, makes all men his brothers. The person's freedom is founded on this love and fraternity and is both creative and liberative. It is something which is not complete but develops through conquests which are ever partial. It is a gift to be developed by responsible acts.

Torn between two realms, "having" and "being", the person must continually struggle to reflect upon his situation and realize that the problematical approach to life may lure him from the mystery of being in which happiness may be found. A constant effort must be expended to make use of the faculty of recuperative or secondary reflection to combat the attraction of the data which primary reflection presents to him as a form of seduction. This faculty, however, may be weakened by certain techniques of depersonalization present in today's world and this demands a certain attitude on the part of the person which reflects an awareness of the dangers and his intention to struggle against them through the deeds which he performs in the line of work in which he finds himself. With the help of certain groups which are animated by the spirit of love he attempts to overcome this appealing attraction to the realm of "having".

The person is not alone in his endeavours for he is a being-with-others. What, then, is his posture in regard

to these "others" in his approach to Being? What role do they play in regard to his "becoming"? This question will be probed in the next section.

Section Two

The Person and the "Other"

Man as homo viator is an incarnate being bound by the limitations of space and time. He is also a being in a situation who experiences his limitations and in whom there is a desire to compensate for his frailty. This was the concern of section one. Experience shows me that I am not an island unto myself - not an isolated entity - in my world there exists other human beings whom I encounter. These human beings are "with me" but in what sense is this so? What should my attitude be in face of these others?

In the philosophy of Sartre, the essence of human relationship is suspicion and conflict. The presence of the "other" is regarded as a threat to my integrity, generating the fear that he may take something from me. Sartre's philosophy isolates the subject and alienates him from others and from God. When one begins from a situation of isolation, it is impossible to establish true interpersonal relations. Hell for Sartre is other people. "L'enfer, c'est les autres."

Marcel, on the contrary, posits the existence and necessity of other beings as constitutive of myself. The meaning of man's existence is to participate in being, it implies a going out from oneself, from the insular ego, to

accept the responsibilities and limitations of co-esse. Participation is, indeed, the method of approach to being, for the person is not a self-enclosed solitary being but rather one who engages himself as a "disponible", communicating being striving for communion and community.

In this section we will attempt to present Marcel's social philosophy, the basis of interpersonal relations. The posture of man vis-à-vis those who make up his environment as well as all other human beings is approached in Chapter IX through the concepts of intersubjectivity (the I-thou) and participation. The behaviour which is constitutive of an authentic being, of a "person-becoming" is expounded in Chapter X by certain concrete approaches to Being. In Chapter XI man's relationship to the absolute "Other", the absolute Thou, is explained, together with the role of faith in the uniting of relationships.

CHAPTER IX

INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND PARTICIPATION

Man is a social being. He is not a being-in-isolation but a being-with-others. "Esse est co-esse" - to be is to be with others - to participate with others. There can be no personal growth in isolation but only through association with other people. "... Si les autres m'échappent, je m'échappe à moi-même, car ma substance est faite d'eux."¹ Human beings are not born persons but they become persons in communion with others. This is not a mere co-existence nor physical juxtaposition but a communion between beings through which man should and must fulfill himself. Ego-centrism is a cause of blindness to self-knowledge and knowledge of self must be achieved through heterocentrism for "... the fact is that we can understand ourselves by starting from the other, or from others and only from them";² they are essential to my being.

My "self" is not revealed to me in my own personal experience considered in its private aspect but rather in relation to the unity or togetherness that I form with other

¹ Gabriel Marcel, Présence et Immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 22.

² Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 9.

people. For this reason Descartes' Cogito is not sufficient as a starting point for existence since it atomizes the individual rather than looking upon the global character of existence. Marcel counteracts this cogito with Sumus.

... But to take up such a position immediately throws into relief the essentially anti-cartesian character of the metaphysic to which we shall have to direct ourselves. It is not enough to say that it is a metaphysic of being; it is a metaphysic of we are as opposed to a metaphysic of I think.³

This metaphysics is elaborated in Marcel's concrete approaches to Being particularly through faith, hope and love by which man is tied to man and to God.

... the more the other or others will have become an integral part of my experience, the more I will be led to recognize their irreducible value as well as the difficulty for us of achieving a lasting harmony here below; and the more necessary it will be to conceive a mode of existence which is different from the one we have known, and which will lead us toward the real and pleromatic unity which will be all in all.⁴

Marcel's social philosophy is contained in the concept of intersubjectivity. As the word implies, it is a relationship between a subject and a subject, not a subject-object relationship. Objectification is the destruction of true personal relationship. This objectification as well as true participation are brought out by various types of

3 Ibid., p. 10.

4 Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 141.

encounters. To encounter someone is not merely to pass him on the street: "... Rencontrer quelqu'un, ce n'est pas seulement le croiser, c'est être au moins un instant auprès de lui, avec lui; c'est dirai-je d'un mot dont je devrai user plus d'une fois, une co-présence."⁵

The preposition "avec" is very important in this context for it can conjure up a whole throng of different sorts of relationships which must be distinguished from each other. The relationship expressed by "avec" here cannot be applied to the world of objects. We can put a chair by the table or beside the table but the chair is never really "with" the table in this sense. When I ask the question "Where is Paul?" I may get the reply "He is with John". "With" in this sense implies juxtaposition or location. When we make a sincere statement to a friend such as "Don't worry, I am with you", and imply by that a kind of unity which really joins us in spirit, then this is the true meaning of "avec" which Marcel wishes to express.⁶

We are among others throughout our lives but in various relationships. Certain "others" go to make up my immediate environment, family, friends, members of my

⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 20.

⁶ Idem, Journal Métaphysique, Paris, Gallimard, 1927, p. 169.

profession, etc. This environment constantly supports me and without it I would wander aimlessly. Certain "others" keep up commercial or everyday relations with me, bus drivers, sales clerks, etc. A third category consists of passers-by, people whom I meet only occasionally and in this context could just as well be non-existent for being "with" them has no existential content. Only the first category would comprise the sphere of true personal relationship although, in certain circumstances, the opportunity might arise by which an encounter in the other two can be transformed to the level of true intersubjectivity.⁷

The concept of encounter admits of degrees and the closer we get to the trivial type, the nearer we get to an encounter that can be treated as an objective crossing of paths. This is nothing but a kind of "elbowing". This type of encounter is experienced each day when we "brush up against" people on the street, on a bus or in the subway. They are mere bodies which are located in space, an object at the sub-human level. There cannot be an encounter in the fullest sense of the word unless the individuals themselves possess a certain inwardness, a certain awareness of

⁷ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 62-63.

the sacredness of the other.⁸

It is quite possible that a single human relationship can work its way up and down this hierarchy of participation. Take, for example, the case of meeting someone on a train. We exchange pleasantries, the weather, taxes, sports. Even though I am addressing him he continues to be "someone", "Mr. so-and-so". He continues to be "he" (lui). However, it is quite possible that a bond can be created between this "other" and myself because of some experience that we may have both shared - there is a closer unity established, we communicate. He ceases to be someone-over-there, lui, but rather becomes a person to whom I feel very close. He becomes a "thou" for me.⁹ The association has thus progressed from a trivial to a significant encounter. This person allows me to discover myself for in treating him as a thou I let down my defenses which separated me from him. These are the defenses which the ego has set up to protect a certain part of my being. It is that part which alienates us from others and we truly communicate with others when they become "thou" for me:

⁸ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 169-170.

⁹ Idem, Journal Métaphysique, p. 145-146.

J'exprimerais encore ceci en disant que je ne communique effectivement avec moi-même que dans la mesure où je communique avec l'autre, c'est à dire où celui-ci devient toi pour moi, car cette transformation ne peut se réaliser que grâce à un mouvement de détente intérieur par lequel je mets fin à l'espèce de contraction par laquelle je me crispe sur moi-même et du même coup me déforme.¹⁰

A human relation needs something that really binds two people, something intimate. "... Relationships between things are external, relationships between people are internal..."¹¹ When I put a chair beside a table, I do not make any difference to the table or chair, I can remove one without any interruption. But my relationship with a "thou" makes a difference to both of us and an interruption of this would have an effect on both of us. We have entered a realm in which the I and you cease to denote two separate entities quite distinct from each other and in which communication is not between a sender and receiver but between "us", or rather a "we". It is through such intimate relationships that we develop as a person. I am open to you and you reveal me to myself and the important factor here is the aspect of self-surrender or "disponibilité" by which the dyadic relationship is established:

10 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 50.

11 Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, p. 222.

... Ce qui est en cause, c'est l'acte par lequel, au lieu de me défendre de l'autre, je m'ouvre à lui et me le rends en quelque façon pénétrable dans la mesure même où je deviens moi-même pénétrable pour lui. Au lieu que toute objectivité, et notamment celle du lui, se réfère à un certain dialogue entre moi et moi-même, ce qui implique une relation triadique, lorsque je suis en présence du toi, une unification intérieure s'opère en moi, à la faveur de laquelle une dyade devient possible.¹²

We have mentioned before that Marcel developed his concepts from experience. So it was with the concept of the "thou". During the war Marcel worked for the Red Cross in the capacity of a reporter to families whose sons were reported missing, wounded, or were on the list of prisoners-of-war. Whenever he could, he made a point of seeing personally those who made inquiries and thus was able to show them sympathy rather than treating them as cases in a file. From this posture he was able to empathize with them and far from objectifying, he personalized them.¹³ It is interesting to note also that Marcel developed the I-thou concept long before he was aware of Martin Buber's work.¹⁴

The dyadic relation, the I-Thou, is the expression of Marcel's theory of participation, for man is not in the world as a spectator but as a participant. All the concrete

12 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 52-53.

13 Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 36.

14 Ibid., p. 39.

approaches are means of participation in Being. This turning towards another being as a "thou" is directly opposed to the consideration of the other as an "it" or a "him". It involves being "with" in the sense of the word explained above. There is a certain finality involved in this relationship which excludes the treatment of the other as an object or as being absent. The other, from this posture, is not the object of my thought nor do I search for exacting, detailed knowledge of him. He becomes an alter ego through whom I really become an I for myself. The qualities of the other are not to be analyzed and categorized but the whole person is affirmed. Any judgments that I make involve the totality of the person. These judgments, however, are a matter of faith and love, residing more in the sphere of invocation than of logical deduction.¹⁵

When we look upon another person as a sort of mechanism which is exterior to us, taking him to pieces in the process, we obtain nothing but a completely exterior knowledge of him which in reality is the denial of his real being. Marcel looks upon such knowledge as sacrilegious, destructive, and degrading. Knowledge of another being must not be separated from the act of love by which we accept this person as a unique creature made in the image of God.¹⁶

¹⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Journal métaphysique, p. 156-57.

¹⁶ Idem, Homo Viator, Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance, Paris, Aubier, 1945, p. 28.

It would be impossible, of course, to deal with other human beings without making certain "it" judgments. The lawyer, doctor, psychologist, social worker, and other professional practitioners cannot discard objective analyses and judgments even when dealing with friends or members of their own families. But they must be constantly on guard against the tendency to treat them as mere cases and not as persons. In this instance, also, we see the necessity of secondary reflection which can safeguard us from treating human beings solely from the data which primary reflection has amassed. Primary reflection is the method of science which speaks in the third person without taking cognizance of the relationship which unites the person with the object of study. We can say to another, for example, "you are good". This judgment can be considered as a judgment en toi or en lui. As a judgment en lui it is instructive but as a judgment en toi it is more in the realm of admiration, it is the expression of my relationship to the "thou" not information about "him". The en toi expresses an ontological relation of being to being, the en lui a dialectical relation of subject to object.¹⁷

Under what conditions, then, may we legitimately say that the other is a "thou" for me? Marcel states that the other must be capable of responding to me, even if it only

17 Gabriel Marcel, Journal métaphysique, p. 156-157.

be a "silence intelligent", otherwise there is only a place for a "lui".¹⁸ This response does not mean mere words in the order of information asked and given but rather an underlining of the living community which exists between I and Thou. A "Thou" is a person who is present to me in a dynamic dialogue, a co-respondent. The man whom I stop on the street to ask directions is not a "thou" for me, for my question could be asked of "anyone at all".¹⁹ The other as a source of information is not a "thou" nor am I when I consider myself as a storehouse of facts or a catalogue.²⁰ When the other person becomes a "thou" for me there is a communion rather than a communication.

Communion arises only in a true encounter, in a personal response. Granted, that the majority of our encounters in every-day life are on the level of the triad in which my fellow man is a "he" for me, not really "present", we can however transcend this exterior communication by taking an interest in his life and condition and it can happen that some bond will arise to unite us in this higher relationship. A shared emotion may be the key which opens us to each other where the I and the thou become one, or communication may be

18 Ibid., p. 158.

19 Ibid., p. 161.

20 Ibid., p. 174.

wordless. "... c'est, par delà les systèmes clos où le jugement nous enferme, une sorte d'indistinction féconde où les êtres communiquent, où ils sont dans et par l'acte même de communication."²¹ This region is the realm of community.

It is in love that the I-Thou relationship is perfected. In love there is no objective judgment, for the more I love the less do I qualify the beloved. I do not enclose the beloved in judgments but affirm him as a totality. His place and date of birth do not enrich the being whom I love.²² I love that which is eternal in the beloved, not his origins or his vices. It is as if I say "I love you because you are you". Once there is love, the beloved cannot be lost - this is the basis of fidelity and presence, important concepts in Marcel's philosophy which will be considered in the next section. It is only in love, in the awareness of persons as persons, that we reach the communion which is necessary to true progress in our own development, it is the only means of union with them since

... Les êtres en tout que tels, en tout qu'intériorisés ne peuvent être qu'à reconnaître et à aimer; car en tout que maître qui doivent être obéis ou qu'instruments à utiliser, ils ne sont pas à proprement parler des êtres.²³

²¹ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 52.

²² Idem, Journal métaphysique, p. 157-158.

²³ Idem, Présence et immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 169.

To treat persons in a non-personal manner is to eliminate communion with them for in doing so we reject that which is, in reality, the only thing which gives them significance, their worth and their being.

The intersubjectivity upon which Marcel grounds his whole philosophy cannot be converted to some simple proposition. The objectifying demands of our language push us toward some designation of this mode of participation and yet Marcel states that it cannot be called a this or a that; it transcends any disjunction of this kind. But he does concede that "... it would not be inaccurate to say that it is an implied understanding which remains an implied understanding even when I try to focus my thought upon it."²⁴ A metaphor in the realm of music may help, a metaphor which is non-optical but real. In the world of music everything is interrelated by a living communication where the harmony of the whole is present to every part. In the concept of intersubjectivity there is present an underlying reality - a community deeply rooted in ontology which leads Marcel to proclaim that "... I concern myself with being only in so far as I have a more or less distinct consciousness of the underlying unity which ties me to other beings of whose

²⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 17.

reality I already have a preliminary notion".²⁵ The intersubjective nexus attaches existence to being. The path from existence to being goes through intersubjectivity and intersubjectivity is implied in all the concrete approaches to being.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

CHAPTER X

CONCRETE APPROACHES TO BEING

Marcel has preferred to develop his reflections through concentration on concrete experiences and through the interplay of ways in which being can be approached by the practice of such actions as hope, fidelity, love, presence.

Hope as the basic requisite of survival and sanity has been discussed in the third chapter since it was an essential element to the consideration of man as a wayfarer towards Being. We will now consider other approaches necessary to the self-actualization of man as man.

1. Fidelity

The central position of fidelity in the economy of his thoughts has been emphasized repeatedly in Marcel's works. It is an approach to Being which links man to himself, to others and to God. It is a key link in the chain which unites being and personal relationships - a link which "makes" or "breaks" man. This connection appears suddenly in his work:

De l'être comme lieu de la fidélité
D'où vient que cette formule qui a jailli
en moi, à un instant donné du temps, présente pour
moi la fécondité inépuisable de certaines idées musicales?
Accès à l'ontologie.
La trahison comme mal en soi.¹

The analysis of fidelity rests upon the consideration of a promise or a vow. Take, for example, the case of a friend who is in hospital dying from an incurable disease. I go to visit him and am deeply moved by the suffering which he is enduring. Noticing that my visit has caused him some pleasure, I promise to come to see him often. This promise was made on the basis of a certain state of feeling in which I found myself at that time. After a few days I notice that the sick person has not improved but my disposition has changed. The sincere and immediate sympathy which I felt while visiting him has disappeared, I only think of him as someone lying in a hospital bed whom I must visit since I promised that I would. The visit now assumes the posture of a task or an obligation - a burden. The question now arises as to the responsibility I have to fulfill my promise. Would I not be behaving inauthentically in attempting to state that I have the same attitude as I did when I made the promise? I find myself on the horns of a dilemma - "Do I keep my promise because I do not want to disappoint my friend

¹ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1935, p. 55-56.

or do I refuse to go because I no longer experience the emotional state in which I made my promise?" - to do so would be acting inauthentically, it would be a betrayal of myself.² The question is, "under what conditions do I consider a promise as binding?" "Am I bound to a promise which I have made on the 'spur of the moment'?" "How can I make a promise when, in the future, I know that my feelings can easily change?"

Marcel rejects the "ethics of sincerity" and the "doctrine of the instant" in attempting to solve these questions, for an instantaneous decision based on insufficient evidence and emotion is not truly constitutive of being. A commitment is only binding when a person is able to transcend his present circumstance. For we must consider both, things which depend on me and things which do not depend on me:

... Il n'y a donc d'engagement possible que pour un être qui ne se confond pas avec sa situation du moment, et qui reconnaît cette différence entre soi et sa situation, qui se pose par conséquent comme en quelque façon transcendant à son devenir, qui réponde de soi...³

Fidelity requires that there be some unity of self which endures from the moment of a pledge into the future, however long that might be. This unity is acquired by the

2 Ibid., p. 66-67.

3 Ibid., p. 57-58.

giving of myself to what I have promised. Fidelity is creative for me; it is linked with Being and aids me in my approach to being by prolonging a "presence" in me:

Si donc une fidélité créatrice est possible c'est parce que la fidélité est ontologique en son principe, parce qu'elle prolonge une présence qui elle-même correspond à une certaine prise de l'être sur nous; par là même multiplie et approfondit d'une manière presque insondable le retentissement de cette présence au sein de notre durée...⁴

One's self, therefore, cannot be the terminus of fidelity but rather it must be something which is beyond us, something which has "a hold" over us, some presence which is perpetuated. The axis of fidelity is not on the self but on another - the presence of the Thou. The self is created by the transformation of the other to a thou: "... Or la fidélité c'est la présence activement perpétuée, c'est le renouvellement du bienfait de la présence - de sa vertue qui consiste à être une incitation mystérieuse à créer..."⁵ The emphasis on "active" is quite important, for fidelity cannot consist in the continuation of the status quo. The person who is faithful will experience "the dark night of the soul" and will be tempted to be blinded by this darkness through which it must pass. But this is a trial which is met day by day

⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique, appended to Le Monde Cassé, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1933, p. 289.

⁵ Ibid., p. 288.

by which fidelity becomes truly creative. To be creative demands an expenditure of energy to counteract the sclerosis of habit and the inertia of conformism and thus avoid dissipation:

... La fidélité est en réalité le contraire d'un conformisme inerte; elle est la reconnaissance active d'un certain permanent non point formel à la façon d'une loi, mais ontologique. En ce sens elle se réfère toujours à une présence ou encore à quelque chose qui peut et doit être maintenu en nous et devant nous comme présence, mais qui ipso facto peut tout aussi bien et même parfaitement être méconnu, oublié, oblitéré; et nous voyons ici reparaître cette ombre de la trahison qui selon moi enveloppe tout notre monde humain comme une nuée sinistre...⁶

This "menace of betrayal" is the destructive note of fidelity for "... il n'est pas de trahison qui ne soit une fidélité reniée".⁷

We often hear of people who die for a "cause", or who are faithful to a "cause", or principle or idea. Marcel regards this as idolatry if it has reference only to the principle itself.⁸ For a principle is a mere abstraction and owes its existence to the act whereby I proclaim or sanction it. It is, au fond, a mere reflection of myself. However, if the supra-personal character of the cause is recognized, we are no longer in the realm of the abstract

⁶ Ibid., p. 287.

⁷ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 72.

⁸ Idem, Position et approches, p. 288.

but in the personal existential realm for "... Il n'y a de fidélité qu'envers une personne, non point envers une idée ou un idéal..."⁹ Fidelity is pledged to the person of the other, not as an automaton but as a being who possesses himself. A commitment cannot be one-sided, it implies a reciprocal giving and pride can never be the basis for an authentic fidelity even though we have examples in everyday life of people who are "faithful" to someone out of pride - once again the ego exerts itself.

Given the fickleness of human beings, can we say that fidelity implies a conditionality? Do we not, in reality, perpetrate an inner swindle when we pledge ourselves unconditionally on the basis of an inner feeling which is transient? The terminus of the oath or promise is the important consideration. "... Conditional pledges are only possible in a world from which God is absent. Unconditionality is the true sign of God's Presence."¹⁰ On a godless level, a promise is not binding if made on the basis of an immediate and actually experienced feeling. "But if we have pledged ourselves before God, it is no longer feeling in its immediacy that counts; or at least we are bound to

⁹ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 139.

¹⁰ Idem, "Theism and Personal Relationships", in Cross Currents, Vol. 1, issue of Fall, 1950, p. 40.

transcend it. We are responsible for one another, we have taken charge of one another."¹¹ True, Creative Fidelity cannot be separated from the idea of an oath taken before God. It implies a sacred undertaking which is sacred in proportion to the freedom with which it is given. This type of fidelity is a free response, it cannot be exacted and it transcends prescriptions.¹² It is based on a relationship which will be unalterable because fidelity is transformed to faith. Fidelity is unshakeable when it does not rely on my own insufficiency but is placed in the hands of the Absolute Thou:

Dès lors cette base de fidélité, qui ne peut manquer de nous paraître en droit précaire dès le moment où je m'engage envers un autre que je ne connais pas, apparaît au contraire inébranlable là où elle est constituée, non pas à vrai dire par une appréhension distincte de Dieu considéré comme quelqu'un d'autre, mais par un certain appel lancé du fond de mon indigence *ad summan altitudinem*; c'est ce que j'ai parfois appelé le recours absolu [...]. Il ne saurait s'agir de compter sur soi, sur ses propres forces, pour faire face à cet engagement démesuré; mais dans l'acte par lequel je le contracte, j'ouvre en même temps un crédit infini à Celui envers qui je le prends, et l'Espérance n'est pas autre chose.¹³

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39-40.

¹² Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, Prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance*, Paris, Aubier, 1945, p. 133.

¹³ *Idem*, *Du refus à l'invocation*, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 217-218.

The principle which animates fidelity and presence is the same principle which permits fidelity to triumph over absence and even the absence which we call death. It is because this principle is not dominated by the limitations of space and time but transcends them:

... La fidélité ne s'affirme vraiment que là où elle défie l'absence, où elle triomphe de l'absence, et en particulier de cette absence qui se donne à nous - peut-être, sans doute, fallacieusement - comme absolue et que nous appelons la mort.¹⁴

The death of the person who has been present to me is really the test of our unity in life. According to the depth of my fidelity this being who was a thou will either continue to exist or not to exist. If the thou was truly present, he will continue to exert an influence on my life - I refuse to treat him as something which never existed, I refuse to annihilate him. I cannot deny the "being" which we are. For in saying he no longer exists, I am not only denying him but denying myself also and perhaps making an absolute denial.¹⁵ Fidelity is pledged to another, not to myself and the being that is generated by this is a we, a nous.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 141.

... Il n'y a donc en réalité aucune raison valable de penser que la fidélité à soi-même soit plus intelligible que la fidélité à autrui et présente par rapport à elle une véritable priorité. C'est bien plutôt l'inverse qui est vrai: je suis sans doute moins immédiatement présent à moi-même que ne l'est celui auquel j'ai donné ma foi.¹⁶

It is difficult to imagine the type of "being" that is a human relationship. It is an attestation to a state which we cannot fully comprehend. It lies in the realm of "mystery".

... A human relationship is really a certain being, which can be protected, fostered, promoted - or endangered, or bruised or even killed. I am inclined to think that such a relationship somehow transcends the consciousness which the members are able to get of it - except perhaps in certain privileged moments which are endowed with a mystical value.¹⁷

The marriage bond is perhaps the best example of absolute commitment to another person. If conditions are introduced in this situation we have a relationship which is based on desire rather than fidelity. The spouses promise to be faithful to each other, come what may. They pledge themselves to each other before God "till death do us part". Self-unity, unity towards each other and unity in God is expressed in this vow. This is why Marcel states that it is most important to consider the state of mind of the individual

16 Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 174.

17 Idem, "Theism and Personal Relationships", p. 38.

who is making this pledge of fidelity.¹⁸ If one partner remains faithful only out of a sense of duty and not of presence, we have constancy replacing fidelity.

Does absolute fidelity require recognition of an Absolute Being? In the final analysis it does. The person who makes an absolute commitment to another being gives tacit recognition to an Absolute Thou. Fidelity is ultimately linked with a faith (not necessarily a determinate religious belief) and "croire [...] c'est toujours croire en un toi, c'est-à-dire en une réalité personnelle ou supra-personnelle susceptible d'être invoquée et comme placée au delà de tout jugement portant sur une donnée objective quelconque..."¹⁹ When I pledge myself absolutely I pledge my whole Being and I cannot reject this pledge without rejecting everything.

... Ce que j'entrevois, c'est qu'à la limite il existerait un engagement absolu qui serait contracté par la totalité de moi-même qui ne pourrait être reniée sans un reniement total - et qui s'adresserait d'autre part à la totalité de l'être et serait pris en présence de cette totalité même.²⁰

True unconditionality is found only in recourse to the absolute thou. All other fidelities aspire to unconditionality. It is a concrete approach to communion with

18 Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 64.

19 Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 220.

20 Idem, Etre et avoir, p. 63.

another subject in whom "I become" and with whom I make the ascent from existence to Being. Any code of ethics which is centered on fidelity leads inevitably to some foundation which is more than human - to a desire for the unconditional which seems to be the stamp of the Absolute which is imprinted on us.²¹ Fidelity is intimately linked with the idea of presence whether it pertains to the Absolute or another "thou".

2. Presence

The term presence is a central one in the philosophy of Marcel. His concern with the objectification of man is again raised by this concept. Presence means something other than being-there in the fashion of an object. We have all had the experience of being in a room with a person who, although near to us physically, someone who can be spoken to, someone that we see, and yet is not really present to us, he is not as close in spirit as a friend who might be a thousand miles away. There is a certain communication between us but it is entirely material, something like the communication of messages between a sender and a receiver. There is no "comm-union" between us "... on pourrait dire que c'est une communication sans communion, et que par là même, c'est

²¹ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 174.

une communication irr  elle".²² This individual interposes himself between me and my own reality. I learn nothing about myself while I am with him. He hides me from myself. On the other hand, when somebody's presence is really felt, it makes me more aware of myself than I would feel without it. "... Cette pr  sence est alors r  v  latrice."²³ This then is a mystery in the sense in which we described the term earlier. The intimacy which is established makes of the other a real co-presence so that I cannot treat him as though he were merely present in the room but rather as present with me and presence can only be realized in an I-Thou relationship.

Marcel finds it difficult to give a rigorous definition of presence since it cannot be objectified.

... Presence can only be - not grasped, for that would be contradictory - but evoked through the aid of direct and unchallengeable experiences which do not rise from the conceptual apparatus which we make use of in order to reach objects.²⁴

One type of experience which exemplifies this could be the types of condolences which are offered at a funeral. Certain persons might offer stereotyped formulas which are

²² Gabriel Marcel, Pr  sence et immortalit  , Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 187.

²³ Ibid., p. 188.

²⁴ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 67.

given out of a sense of duty or obligation; we may feel that such persons are not really present, not "with" us. Another person may say nothing but by his look, smile, or wordless empathy has given testimony of his presence - he is "with" us. This is that mysterious presence or relationship which is quite different from professional relations and the duties which arise from them.

Presence is linked with disponibilité (availability). There are certain people who give us the feeling of being available, of making room for us in themselves when we are in need. It is not something that is visible at the material level - it is a mode of giving which is not at the level of material action (although it may be present in this). It is a relationship which is objectively indefinable but one in which a person makes me feel that he is "with" me. It involves a reciprocal openness and acceptance:

... Si en présence de l'autre je suis encombré d'arrière-pensées à son sujet, ou si, ce qui revient exactement au même, je lui prête à lui des arrière pensées à mon endroit, il est de toute évidence que nous ne sommes pas ensemble dans la lumière. Je me fais ombre à moi-même. Du coup, il cesse de m'être présent, et réciproquement, je ne puis pas non plus être présent pour lui.²⁵

Presence is not something contrived or artificial. It is something enduring and yet spontaneous. "... La

²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, Présence et immortalité, p. 189.

présence est quelque chose qui se révèle immédiatement et irrécusablement dans un regard, un sourire, un accent, un serrement de mains..."²⁶

The distinction between problem and mystery is very important in a consideration of presence. A presence which can be reduced to a problem is no longer a presence. It is beyond all possible experimental proof. The experience of telepathy demonstrates that modes of co-presence exist which are not reducible to a certain juxtaposition that is so prevalent in our minds when we think of communication between two people! The non-objectifiability of presence does not mean that it is merely subjective - we should rather think of intersubjectivity.²⁷ Intersubjectivity implies a certain reciprocal openness and availability which establishes an intimacy which is non-measurable and exists in a philosophy of "light" which transcends all categories of objectivity. "... L'intersubjectivité, on pourrait dire que c'est le fait d'être ensemble dans la lumière."²⁸ This "being together in the light" is the type of presence which survives the boundaries of death, it is an invincible assurance of perpetuation

²⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique, p. 293.

²⁷ Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 255.

²⁸ Idem, Présence et immortalité, p. 189.

because it exists in a realm that is not subject to the observable:

Or, la présence telle que je l'ai évoquée est supra-hypothétique, elle donne lieu à une assurance invincible qui est liée à l'amour oblatif, elle s'exprime par des affirmations telles que: "je suis assuré que tu me demeures présent et cette assurance est liée au fait que tu ne cesses de m'assister, que tu m'assistes peut-être plus directement que tu ne pouvais le faire sur la terre. Nous sommes ensemble dans la lumière, ou plus exactement j'accède, dans les moments où je me détache de moi-même, ou je cesse de me faire ombre, à une lumière qui est ta lumière: je ne veux certes pas dire celle dont tu es la source, mais celle ou toi-même tu t'épanouis, celle que tu contribues à réfléchir ou à rayonner sur moi.²⁹

The act by which another becomes present to me is a gratuitous act, i.e. an act which implies grace. It is something which is beyond know-how, beyond a method which can be taught. It would be chimerical to hope to teach someone the art of making his presence felt to another person - he might be able to draw attention to himself by gestures and funny faces, but this is not the meaning of presence. This art is, in reality, a grace.³⁰ Presence is closely linked with charm, for charm is one of the ways in which a presence makes itself felt but felt only in the atmosphere of a certain intimacy. Charm is "... the presence of a person spreading out beyond what he actually does [...]. It is an overplus, a beyond."³¹

²⁹ Ibid., p. 191.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 188.

³¹ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, p. 254.

The fact that it is evident under some conditions and not in others, for some people and not others, underlines the non-objective aspect of charm and, once again, of presence. Charm and presence consist in a recognition of the person as person, as a totality, not as possessing certain characteristics. Presence is felt in communion and is not something that may be thought of as being transmitted from one person to another as a message is transmitted, for transmission pertains to the realm of objects. It is not something that can be grasped or comprehended, i.e. by the intelligence, "... a presence can, in the last analysis, only be invoked or evoked".³²

The presences which surround us day by day are seldom conscientiously experienced as presences yet it takes only a small occurrence to jolt us out of this lethargy or habit - an illness or even a journey can bring us back to the realization of persons as presences and it is toward the person as embodied presence that we must strive. A prerequisite in the attainment of this attitude is the quality of love.

3. Love

Of all the concrete approaches to being, love is the most dynamic and the most essential. It is love which breaks

³² Ibid., p. 256.

us out of the prison of the ego and shatters the barrier which exists between the self and the other. Love is the force which creates the unity between the I and the Thou since it transcends both the level of the self and the other:

... Mais nous savons bien que ce plan du soi-même et de l'autre peut-être transcendé: il l'est dans l'amour, il l'est dans la charité. L'amour gravite autour d'une certaine position qui n'est ni celle du soi, ni celle de l'autre en tant qu'autre; c'est ce que j'ai appelé le toi...³³

It is the subordination of the self to a superior reality which is truly liberative of man and which will fulfill him. Since it breaks this tension between the self and the other it may truly be called the essential ontological datum, "La donnée ontologique essentielle",³⁴ one which it is necessary to recognize to overcome the tendency to objectification and problematization.

Desire and love move in different realms. Desire is closely linked to objectification, for to desire is to desire something, and therefore resides in the realm of having; it is essentially autocentric, a property of the self-enclosed ego. Love, on the other hand, transcends the opposition of the same and the other and implants us in Being.³⁵ Desire

33. Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 243.

34 Ibid., p. 244.

35 Ibid., p. 220.

presupposes a triadic relationship, the conversion of a "thou" into a "he". Love implies a dyad which is free of all possessive desire and operates on a level where a "thou" can never be converted to a "he".³⁶

Marcel bases his whole ontology on love or on intersubjectivity, which is the same thing. "... 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."³⁷ This is certainly an approach which is different from the traditional concern with "being in general" or "thought in general". Such a traditional approach has no drawing power for Marcel because he is interested in "getting down to cases" and plunging himself into concrete situations. This does not limit his considerations to himself but he must consider everyone who may have contact with his thought. He must think sub specie aeterni considering those who went before and those who come after and it is only by raising oneself to a really concrete perception of his own experience that he can be attuned to the understanding of others and their experience.³⁸ In love

³⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, New York, Newman Press, 1967, p. 69.

³⁷ Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 191.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 6-7.

we find the destruction of the opposition between l'en moi et le devant moi and the sphere of the "métaproblématique" coinciding with love.³⁹

It would be wrong for us to think that Marcel sets up a dichotomy between knowledge and love.

... la connaissance d'un être individuel n'est pas séparable de l'acte d'amour ou de charité par lequel cet être est posé dans ce qui le constitue comme créature unique, ou si l'on veut, comme image de Dieu.⁴⁰

They constitute two aspects of the same concrete activity. A divorce between the two can only take place when intelligence is degraded or "se cérébralise" and when love reduces itself to carnal desire. Where love on the one side and intelligence on the other are elevated to their highest expression, they cannot fail to meet. They do not become identical, for we would then relegate them to the world of abstractions in which mutual identity can exist - Love and intelligence are the most concrete things in the world.⁴¹ It should be repeated that Marcel is not against abstraction, but its dangers.

³⁹ Gabriel Marcel, Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique, p. 269.

⁴⁰ Idem, Homo Viator, p. 28.

⁴¹ Idem, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 13.

The relationship between love and knowledge is the basis of the evolution of Marcel's thought according to Bagot:

... C'est l'amour qui l'avait poussé à s'insurger contre les prétentions d'un savoir abstrait. C'est l'amour, tel qu'il l'a vécu, qui l'a contraint de reconnaître qu'il ne pouvait y avoir de réalité qu'à l'intérieur de la vérité. Ainsi, peu à peu, l'ancienne opposition du savoir et de la participation a-t-elle fait place à une réconciliation: intelligence et amour sont devenus les deux faces de notre activité totale, et leur continuelle interférence est apparue comme la condition de la densité de notre vie spirituelle.⁴²

Knowledge and love are united in that mysterious being recognized "... à la fois comme la lumière qui nous éclaire et comme l'élan d'amour qui nous suscite".⁴³

Bagot's conception of the basis of Marcel's evolution of his ideas is partially correct. It is true that Marcel was concerned with love, but with love developed through the consideration of the death of the loved one. "... Je n'hésite pas à dire que ma vie tout court - et la vie même de mon esprit - se sont développées sous le signe de la mort d'autrui."⁴⁴ This concern was the origin of the controversy with Leon Brunschvicg. When he was accused of placing too

⁴² Jean-Pierre Bagot, Connaissance et Amour, Essai sur la philosophie de Gabriel Marcel, Paris, Beauchesne et Ses Fils, 1958, p. 66.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 232.

⁴⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Présence et immortalité, p. 182.

much importance on his own death, Marcel replied, "... ce qui compte, ce n'est ni ma mort, ni la vôtre, c'est celle de qui nous aimons...".⁴⁵ In other words, the essential problem to consider is the problem of the conflict between death and love. It is in love that death is overcome.

... S'il y a en moi une certitude inébranlable, c'est qu'un monde déserté par l'amour ne peut que s'engloutir dans la mort, mais c'est aussi que là où l'amour persiste, là où il triomphe de tout ce qui tend à le dégrader, la mort ne peut pas ne pas être en définitive vaincue.⁴⁶

If Marcel is preoccupied with death, it is merely to bring to our attention the concrete approaches to Being by which death is transcended. This theme is reiterated in several of Marcel's works and we find it expressed first by a character in his play L'Emissaire with whom he most closely identifies himself:

Il y a une chose que j'ai découverte après la mort de mes parents, c'est que ce que nous appelons survivre, en vérité c'est sous-vivre, et ceux que nous n'avons pas cessé d'aimer avec le meilleur de nous-même, voici qu'ils deviennent comme une voûte palpitante, invisible, mais pressentie et même effleurée sous laquelle nous avançons toujours plus couchés, plus arrachés à nous même, vers l'instant où tout sera englouti dans l'amour.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Gabriel Marcel, "L'Emissaire", in Vers au Autre Royaume, Paris, Plon, 1949, p. 109.

In another of his plays, L'Insondable, one of the principal characters, Edith, reproaches l'Abbé Seveilhac for his attitude towards the dead and emphasizes the role of love in regard to those who have died:

Edith: ... Au fond, pour vous les morts ne sont plus là; et vous ne pensez autrement que ceux qui ne croient pas. Quelle qui soit l'existence glorieuse et impossible d'imaginer que vous leur attribuez [...] Pour vous ce ne sont plus des vivants. Mais pour moi [...] les vrais morts, les seuls morts sont ceux que nous n'aimons plus.⁴⁸

To love a being is to say, "... Thou, at least, Thou shalt not die".⁴⁹ By this affirmation we assert that there is something in the person, something in our love which bridges the abyss between life and death. This affirmation is not subjectivist but relies upon a faith in something which transcends man, for "... love is the active refusal to treat itself as subjective and it is in this refusal that it cannot be separated from faith; in fact it is faith".⁵⁰ As with hope, love implies a prophetic assurance, which is contrary to that of a wish or a choice.

One cannot deny the fact that every individual is subject to destruction by the very fact that he participates

⁴⁸ Gabriel Marcel, "L'Insondable", appended to Présence et Immortalité, p. 228.

⁴⁹ Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 69.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

in the nature of things. In so far, however, as he is a "Thou" for me, he rises beyond the nature of things and becomes a being who is indestructible even though the outward appearances of destruction are present. The one who is loved is exempted in this manner from the penalties which are attributed to things. The indestructibility that Marcel refers to is that of a significant bond or tie rather than an object. The two people who are united by this bond of love have planted the seed of immortality. It is not a love which is narcissistic or possessive but it is a pledge of participation in eternity which is not self-enclosed but open to universal communion.

Il n'y a pas d'amour humain digne de ce nom qui ne constitue aux yeux de celui qui le pense à la fois un gage et une semence d'immortalité; mais d'autre part il n'est sans doute pas possible de penser cet amour sans découvrir qu'il ne peut pas constituer un système clos, qu'il se dépasse en tous sens, qu'il exige au fond, pour être pleinement lui-même, une communion universelle hors de laquelle il ne peut se satisfaire, et est voué en fin de compte à se corrompre et à se perdre; et cette communion universelle elle-même ne peut se suspendre qu'au Toi absolu; il convient de faire justice une fois pour toutes des illusions positivistes à cet égard.⁵¹

The more the relationship which unites me to another being is strictly possessive, the more his disappearance can be considered as the loss of an object such as a favorite pipe. The more, however, my love is oblation rather than possessive,

⁵¹ Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, p. 201.

the more the loved one will always be a presence to me. Possessive love is essentially autocentric while oblativ love is heterocentric. In oblativ love egocentrism is transcended and each one becomes a center for the other. Thus they form a mysterious unity:

... L'amour humain [...] comporte une r  ciprocit   assez profonde pour que l'h  t  rocentrisme soit double, pour que chacune devienne centre pour l'autre. Ainsi se cr  e une unit   qui n'est pas moins myst  rieuse que celle dont j'ai parl      propos de l'incarnation.⁵²

This reciprocity is the essential aspect of love for we can only love a person, a subject, one who is capable of showing love in return. This is the reason why Marcel equates love with intersubjectivity and shows that love can only be existential and presential not objective. Aline in La Chapelle Ardente represents an extreme example of possessive love that tries to hold fast to its object even beyond the portals of Death. Weiner Schnee in Le Dard is true to his friend to the end and shows that his love has formed a bridge that has overcome this death. Aline and Weiner are examples of eros and agape respectively.

All the concrete approaches to Being are essentially linked with love. Moreover love and hope are inseparable. "... For a person without love, hope is not possible, only

⁵² Gabriel Marcel, Pr  sence et immortalit  , p. 186.

lust and ambition; and every ambition seeks to acquire some satisfaction for itself."⁵³ Again, Marcel links love and hope to an appeal; "... L'espérance n'est pas seulement une protestation dictée par l'amour, elle est une sorte d'appel, de recours éperdu à un allié qui est amour lui aussi".⁵⁴ There is an identity also between love and fidelity.⁵⁵ Presence and absolute "disponibilité" form a unity together with love.⁵⁶ Freedom and love are also identical.⁵⁷ A little earlier we saw that love, faith and intersubjectivity were really the same thing.

This convergence and identity of these concrete approaches underline the unity that should be present in an authentic human Being. "... Humaines ou non, cela signifie: Pénétrées ou non d'amour..."⁵⁸ This emphasis on love as the unifying factor of human existence is reminiscent of St. Augustine's motto "Ama et fac quod vis". Love in St. Augustine's as well as in Marcel's writings is the same as faith and for this reason there is something which is

53 Gabriel Marcel, Searchings, p. 65-66.

54 Idem, Etre et avoir, p. 115.

55 Ibid., p. 64.

56 Ibid., p. 19.

57 Idem, Searchings, p. 68.

58 Idem, L'homme problématique, p. 56.

unconditional implied in it.⁵⁹ This unconditionality is the same as that of hope because it is linked to Being:

... [L'Amour] c'est la foi elle-même, l'assurance invincible fondée sur l'Être même. Ici, et ici seulement, nous atteignons non seulement une inconditionnalité de fait, mais une inconditionnalité intelligible; celle du Toi absolu, celle qui s'exprime dans le Fiat Voluntas Tua du Pater.⁶⁰

Love involves a commitment to a person who is united to me by the bond of common creation and parentage. Authentic love must be based on the value which is inherent in each creature and brother because he is the imago Dei. Love, in any other sense is doomed to destruction because it would partake of the destiny of objects or created "things".

La réalité de l'aimé transcende toute explication, toute réduction. Par delà ton essence déterminable, mon amour s'adresse à ce qui, en toi est éternel. Je te pose au-dessus des genèses et vicissitudes. Aussi, je surmonte le jugement qui te classe, je dépasse la connaissance objective ignorante de toute transcendance. Je crois, pour toi, au renouvellement perpétuel de l'être. Quand on aime, rien n'est jamais - rien ne peut être - absolument perdu.⁶¹

Love cannot be an object of knowledge for the loved one transcends knowledge, is beyond all characterization or

⁵⁹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 74.

⁶⁰ Idem, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 179.

⁶¹ Roger Troisfontaines, "La notion de présence chez Gabriel Marcel", in Existentialisme chrétien: Gabriel Marcel, E. Gilson, ed., Paris, Plon, 1947, p. 238.

predicates. Love is not interested in detail since these are characteristics of objects:

... A partir du moment où celui-ci est posé comme objet, l'amour devient une connaissance, la liberté créatrice de l'amant s'enchaîne elle-même et se convertit en une forme abstraite qui laissera bientôt réapparaître le contenu abstrait lui-même qu'est individualité empirique.⁶²

Every verification presupposes a triad, un tiers. Love, free from all possessiveness is on the level of a dyad, a level where a "you" can never be converted to a "him", the level of the Nous.

Since true love is beyond the order of the objective and the problematical, we cannot consider the question of the criterion of true love. But our consideration of love would have to give recognition to its essential connection with fidelity.

Love gives to life a dynamism that is unparalleled. This is what Marcel calls the "ontological weight of human experience".⁶³ The person who appears to us as having progressed further than ourselves on the road to Being presents himself as a witness who radiates his life like a light or beacon which keeps our path enlightened. The

⁶² Gabriel Marcel, Fragments Philosophiques 1909-1914, Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1961, p. 97.

⁶³ Idem, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, p. 79.

importance of intersubjectivity is emphasized by the benefit that I receive from this person's attestation or witness and the motivation that I receive to become a co-witness with this other being. Our life is a participation and we participate in being by creating ourselves as pure subjects through love.⁶⁴

This participation in Being must, in the final analysis, be referred to an Absolute Thou who is the Beginning and the End of all the concrete approaches.

⁶⁴ Gabriel Marcel, Fragments Philosophiques, 1909-1914, p. 97.

CHAPTER XI

THE ABSOLUTE THOU AND FAITH

The exigence of transcendence which was discussed earlier has come to its fulfillment in the existence of the Absolute Thou who is the Principle, End and only Resort of man's consciousness. The traditional proofs for the existence of God, the Absolute Thou, are unconvincing for Marcel. When a man has experienced the presence of God, he not only has no need of proofs but he may even consider the attempts at proof as a scandal against something which is for him a sacred testimony. On the other hand, the motives for disbelief must be understood before we should assume that these proofs have any "convincing" value.

The atheist's pronouncement of a verdict of non-existence of God may rest on two kinds of observation. On the one hand, he may make his verdict on the basis that he has had no experience of God - "If God existed, he would certainly make me aware of his existence". On the other hand, his verdict may be made on the basis of certain "incontestable facts" which are, in his claim, incompatible with the existence of God. These "facts" are usually connected with the presence of evil in the world. Albert Camus, for example, cannot see how a God worthy of the name

could tolerate the sufferings of children.¹ This judgment of incompatibility is in reality a judgment of inconsistency. When, on the human plane, I make a statement such as "if he had been here, this would not have happened", I make it on the basis of an exact knowledge of the person concerned and the manner in which he would act. In the case of God, the atheist bases his view on a certain idea that he has, not on experience. He attributes certain characteristics to God which, in his mind, are inseparable from the idea that he has formed of his essence and behaviour. Here we can see the absurdity of attempting to put ourselves in God's place.²

The believer confronting a non-believer may be sorely tempted to interpret this non-belief as ill will or bad faith. This temptation must be overcome, according to the dictates of intersubjectivity, so that he may be open to an understanding of the other to whom the "light" has not been given. Participation in God does not rely solely on intellectual assent to his existence - this is why Marcel dismisses the purely rational proofs. For God is not some sort of objective datum which we know in the same way as we know a tree.

1 Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 196.

2 Ibid., p. 81-83.

God is a Thou whom I invoke - He gives Himself to me and it is through my reciprocity that I myself become a subject:

Mais là où le Toi est absolu, c'est à dire où il échappe par essence à toute prise objective, là où il n'est, je ne dis pas accessible, mais présent qu'à l'invocation, c'est à dire à la prière, le problème change d'aspect. Assurément il y a une intermittence de la conscience religieuse ou de l'expérience mystique - liée elle aussi à la structure même de la créature que je suis; mais il n'en reste pas moins que le Toi absolu ne peut être, je ne dis pas atteint, mais pensé que par delà toutes les questions que ne cesse d'éveiller en nous la créature: qui est-elle? que veut-elle? que pense-t-elle? J'ai toujours pensé que les attributs de Dieu tels que les définit la théologie rationnelle, la simplicité, l'inaltérabilité, etc., ne prennent pour nous une valeur que si nous parvenons à y reconnaître les caractères d'un Toi que nous ne pouvons traiter comme un lui sans le dénaturer, sans le ramener à notre humaine et dérisoire mesure. "Lorsque nous parlons de Dieu, ce n'est pas de Dieu que nous parlons", ai-je écrit naguère. On ne le dira jamais trop fortement, il y a un piège de l'affirmation théologique en tant que telle; car ces "caractères" que je viens d'évoquer, s'ils sont saisis comme des prédicats, paraissent les plus pauvres de tous.³

God can never become an impersonal he for he is the Absolute Thou: "... si un toi empirique peut être converti en un lui, Dieu est le toi absolu qui ne peut jamais devenir un lui".⁴ The use of the word "him" implies that I look upon God as an object exterior to my dialogue, someone separated from me, absent rather than absolute presence, spoken

³ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 53-54.

⁴ Idem, Journal métaphysique, Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 137.

of rather than invoked. "... Dès qu'on parle de Dieu, ce n'est plus de Dieu qu'on parle."⁵ God cannot be objectified, he can only be reached in invocation and prayer. He is only God so long as he remains the Absolute Thou.

Marcel has not written any explicit philosophical treatise on God but has concentrated on the concrete approaches to being which, in order to be truly efficacious, are directed to perfection in the Pleroma of Being. The awareness of the Absolute Thou is a function of secondary reflection for "... secondary reflection, while not yet being itself faith, succeeds at least in preparing or fostering what I am ready to call the spiritual setting of faith".⁶ The relation between faith and reflection is brought out in Marcel's play Le Palais de Sable in which the specious faith of Moirans, a combination of the appreciation of aesthetic beauty and social utility of Christianity has contaminated the belief of his daughter Clarissa to such an extent that she rejects the belief rather than regarding her analysis of the faith of her father as a step forward in support of her own faith.

The God of the philosophers cannot be the Absolute Thou, according to Marcel, for we can only bear testimony

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 74.

to the living God. The God with whom philosophers and theologians of the traditional type have been concerned, the God whose existence they claim to demonstrate does not stand in the dimension which is that of faith. He lives in the mind that knows Him, exists by the fact that he is known and lives as long as he is known. The living God is beyond the abstractions of the intellect and is known in charity, justice and Presence in my neighbours. He is not "at a distance" but "here". It is not an idea to which we testify but a person.⁷ God is sought and loved in intersubjectivity and it is in the concept of the Mystical Body that life is to be lived for -

... Mankind has got to choose between a termitary and what is called the Mystical Body [...] this is essential in every respect, but primarily because it is the only way of putting aside an individualistic or atomistic interpretation of personal relationships. Metaphysically speaking the truth doubtless is that every genuine personal relationship is really a way into that growing and living community to which Christian Theology gives the name of the Mystical Body.⁸

God cannot be "caught" by demonstrations or proofs but is to be sought in invocation, in humility and prayer. Prayer is real only when intersubjectivity is found in it. It is not a request nor the mechanical recitation of

7 Ibid., p. 46-47.

8 Gabriel Marcel, "Theism and Personal Relationships", in Cross Currents, Vol. 1, issue of Fall 1950, p. 42.

formulae. "... It is a certain very humble and fervent way of uniting oneself with..."⁹ It is, in a certain way, a surrender. Once again we see the central position of intersubjectivity in Marcel's thought. It is the basis of his ontology. The recognition of the appeal of the Absolute Thou and our recourse to Him is a matter of faith.

The concept of faith is implicit in the realization of the authentic discharge of all other concepts. There is an especially close interrelationship, however, between faith and fidelity, since faith cannot exist without fidelity.

"... Il n'y a pas de foi sans fidélité. La foi n'est pas par elle-même un mouvement de l'âme, un transport, un ravissement; elle est une attestation perpétuée."¹⁰ The path of fidelity leads to faith and seeks there its fulfillment. Faith is absolute fidelity.¹¹

The attachment to such or such a particular being in itself opens the door to possible deception but there is no possible deception when our relationship is rooted in God himself. If disappointment does come, it will come as a result of my own inadequacy. This reliance on God, faith,

9 Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 115.

10 Idem, Etre et avoir, Paris, Aubier, Editions Montaigne, 1935, p. 316.

11 Idem, Présence et immortalité, Paris, Flammarion, 1959, p. 217.

is the antithesis of counting on oneself, on one's own resources. In the act by which I commit myself to God, I extend an infinite credit to Him and this is also the source of my hope.

The notion of credit is quite important in considering the concept of faith in Marcel. This notion of credit must be stripped of its material weight for the credit that I extend to another is in reality myself.¹² Believing means rather giving oneself, not undergoing. This "X" to which credit is extended can only be a personal or supra-personal reality. We often use the expression "to believe in a cause" or "putting our trust in something", but this implies a personalization of the thing. To believe in someone is to put one's trust in him and one can only put one's trust in a Thou, in a being capable of being invoked.¹³

To clarify his meaning, Marcel makes a distinction between opinion conviction and faith. "... Opinion is a seeming which tends to become a claiming..."¹⁴ This implies a transition from appearance to affirmation which is brought about by a lack of reflection. It is, by definition, a unilateral judgment. Conviction stands mid-way between opinion

12 Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 176.

13 Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 89.

14 Ibid., p. 78.

and faith. It has the character of taking up a definitive stand on something - a certain aspect of finality. It puts up a sort of barrier, claiming the assurance that nothing which may happen later will modify one's way of thinking.¹⁵ This is a closed-mind attitude. Faith is open, one places oneself at the disposal of something and the pledge that is given is not only directed to what one has but also to what one is. Thus we can see the existential impact attached in principle to faith which is lacking in conviction. The words used to express conviction may be the same as those used to express faith but the words of conviction are used in an absolute manner, a challenging fashion, a defiant attitude, while the words of faith are expressive of a disponibilité, of an invocation, an appeal and a response - an openness to a reality which I can involve^k. To believe in someone is to place confidence in him, to have assurance that this someone will not betray the trust that I have placed in him. This assurance is not a conviction, not a "sure thing", "... it goes beyond what has strictly speaking been given to me, it is a jump, a bet - and, like all bets, it can be lost".¹⁶ The essential element in faith cannot be verified nor dismissed by objective evidence. All the

15 Ibid., p. 86.

16 Ibid., p. 87.

strength of one's being is tied up in the act of faith and this gives it vitality for "... the strongest belief, or more exactly the most living belief, is that which absorbs must fully all the powers of your being".¹⁷

Faith, however, can be degraded into an opinion - we speak of a person "losing his faith". This is the result of looking at it as something he has picked up and blindly adopted, treating it as an objective datum. When the person in whom we believe is transformed into a "him", then it becomes an opinion that I have of that person. I become cut off from the person in whom I believed and with whom I identified myself:

Seulement, aussitôt que nous nous représentons la croyance, celle-ci devient la croyance d'un tel en tel autre, en un lui; nous nous la figurons alors comme l'idée ou l'opinion que A se forme de B. Il faut ajouter que je puis à chaque seconde devenir étranger à moi-même, et pour autant perdre contact avec ma croyance saisie dans son être de croyance. J'irais même plus loin encore; couramment, normalement, je suis en fait coupé de cette croyance qui est moi et qui n'est aucunement séparable de ce que je dois bien appeler mon âme. C'est le sens où j'ai pu dire souvent que nous ne savons pas nous-mêmes ce que nous croyons.¹⁸

All that has been said about fidelity is applicable to faith for faith is really absolute fidelity and it is in faith, and it alone, that the other fidelities find their

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Gabriel Marcel, Du refus à l'invocation, p. 220-221.

guarantee. Fidelity in human relations is not something which is in addition to faith but it is the person's way of expressing the faith that he has in the Absolute Thou for "... Dieu ne veut nullement être aimé par nous contre le créé, mais glorifié à travers le créé et en partant de lui."¹⁹ This is the basis for our treatment of our neighbour because:

... If belief in a living God is not to sink into mythology, it means, not exclusively but at least secondarily, that every approach to justice, for example, or to charity, in the person of my neighbour, is at the same time an approach to this God Himself; and this entails an entirely concrete but quite mysterious relation between this living God and this creature who is my neighbour.²⁰

Faith, as was mentioned before, is unceasing attestation, testimony or witness. This witness is not of something which is exterior to me but of a relationship which is embodied in my life itself, a relationship of a father to a son for "... it is precisely as fatherhood in its purity that the relation between the living God and the faithful should be conceived".²¹ It is when this relationship is incarnated and exemplified in my everyday life that I can speak of creative testimony just as we did about creative fidelity. My vocation is to bear witness to the "light"

19 Gabriel Marcel, Etre et avoir, p. 196.

20 Idem, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, p. 147.

21 Ibid., p. 157.

which has been given to me. Faith is not one attestation among others but it is the foundation of all fidelities. In human relationships fidelity is beset by risk - the person to whom I am faithful may betray me or I may deceive myself with an idea of him - not so with faith. God alone cannot deceive me nor deny me. In him my fidelity can be absolute and I cannot deny him without denying my whole being. He is the guarantor of my faith. I open to him an unconditional credit. If I yield to temptations of denial, I would have to admit that there was something lacking in my faith, some condition attached to it.

Faith is by no means an irrational assent for it is the basis of all the other concrete approaches. If faith goes, so does hope for "... it is the presence of faith that gives to hope its intelligible frame".²² There is a temptation, however, to interpret faith in a purely voluntarist sense but upon reflection on the concept of Grace which Marcel makes, this danger can be overcome. If we recognize that each one's essence is a gift not a datum, and that it is on the basis of such a recognition that we make our own decisions, then we can see the intelligible aspect of faith. There is a connection which binds together faith and the spirit of truth.

²² Ibid., p. 193.

The spirit of truth is nothing if it is not a light which is seeking for the light; intelligibility is nothing if it is not at once a coming together and the nuptial joy which is inseparable from this coming together. The more I tend to raise myself toward this Uncreated Light, without which I am left in the dark - which would mean that I have no being at all - the more I in some way advance in faith.²³

Both will and intelligence come together in faith.

The act of faith is a free act, the act of the person considered in its concrete unity, i.e. there can be some hesitation surrounding this act but this is a hesitation generated by the freedom which we have to accept or reject a gift. Faith should not be regarded as a given, i.e. imposed upon us in any way. We have the responsibility of preparing the ground, to rid ourselves of prejudices which block the influx of faith - we have "... to make ourselves open to grace".²⁴ This preparation which seems to be necessary before the arrival of grace, is in itself of the same order as grace. Thus Marcel sees the concept of grace as a gift but not as a "given". This gift is intimately linked with man's freedom and also aids man in understanding experiences which he undergoes:

23 Ibid., p. 199.

24 Ibid., p. 200.

And of this experience he observes that no understanding can be achieved without taking account of that mysterious and essentially discrete reality which is called grace, and which is primarily defined, not merely by its irreducibility to freedom, but rather by the secret stimulus which emanates from it and without which it is likely that freedom itself would lose its meaning.²⁵

Grace is operative in all experiences of man. Faith is not an affirmation I make in order to avoid the pitfalls of nihilism. I do not affirm in order to exist but I exist in order to affirm. This is my meaning, my vocation.

The act of faith, the act which reaches out to the Transcendence, is a creative act. The Absolute Thou is the basis of all I-thou relationships since it is only through this Being that the human person is able to achieve a loving community with others and is able to reach the sacred character of his own dignity and the dignity of others. Relationships in this context are both vertical and horizontal for every relationship between beings is personal and the relationship between God and myself, between myself and others is nothing if it exists on an impersonal, objective level. "Aimer réellement un être, c'est l'aimer en Dieu."²⁶

In resumé, we can see that section two of this treatment of Marcel's philosophy cannot stand by itself but forms

²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 168.

²⁶ Idem, Journal métaphysique, p. 158.

an integral part, a unity with the treatment offered in section one.

The person strives for communion and community through participation with others in I-thou relationships. This is a sine qua non of a development which is grounded in love. The relationship to the Absolute Thou evokes, through faith, a fidelity which is creative and develops into a presence which is not necessarily physical but which is of the order of a mystical quality by which others are "with" us. The love which founds this relationship is oblation rather than possessive and serves as a unifying principle of all the concrete approaches to Being. It is through this concept of love or intersubjectivity that God is sought and through him we attain that unity of community which is described in religious terms as the Mystical Body.

The unity of Marcel's philosophy can thus be shown by the thematic approach ^{to} ~~of~~ the individual taken in his individuality together with the mysterious relationships which binds him to other individuals through the exigence of being. This is a highly personal approach and certain positive and negative qualities are present. These will be outlined in the following section.

Section Three

CHAPTER XII

CRITICAL OVERVIEW OF MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

Marcel has elaborated a unique and detailed philosophy of the person. As a philosopher who is concerned with discerning and promoting the realm of "being" over the benumbing attraction of the realm of "having", he has brought into relief the essential dignity and vocation of man and has concerned himself with an analysis and description of human relationships.

Man, as a wayfarer towards Being, has not been flung into existence by some chemical force but created by Transcendent Being whom man invokes in humility and prayer, not as to some being contrived by the mind of man but as a response to an appeal sent forth by the existent to the Transcendent. This is the source of man's dignity and the basis for his recognition of other beings as brothers. Moreover, the existence of this Transcendent, personal Being is the foundation of man's life and aspirations, the basis of hope and the denial of despair. Man is an incarnate being composed of body and soul and also a being in a situation. Incarnation and situation are constitutive elements of the person.

This being, man, is weak and suffers from many limitations. He has a tendency to substitute values in the world of "being" for values in the world of "having". For this reason he must constantly reflect on his experiences in order that he may re-direct himself to the main road of "being" rather than taking the side-road of "having" which eventually leads to despair.

Forces are at work in the world to degrade man and lull him into a false sense of security. These forces or techniques of degradation are to be combatted by each individual who seeks help in recourse to the Transcendent and works within small groups to bring help to his brother. Man's road to Being is signposted by certain concrete approaches, faith, hope, love, fidelity, presence. These approaches are in opposition to the specious virtues of the realm of "having".

The freedom of homo viator is not absolute but must be won through constant effort. Any conquest in an attempt to achieve freedom must be regarded as partial. Freedom does not consist in doing what one wants to do but it can be most fully realized in recognition of the rights of others and in one's vocation of becoming a person.

Marcel's philosophy is an appealing and satisfying way of life. However taken by itself it presents dangers because of the lacunae in his exposition. One gets the

impression that we are on the right road but on reflection we are unsure if we have made the necessary provisions for the trip. There is a certain incompleteness about Marcel's philosophy which is frustrating. Marcel recognizes the fact that his is an "open" enquiry but this is little consolation for the wayfarer who wants to know how his philosophy may be completed. A thorough study of his works will reveal an ethics, an epistemology, a social philosophy, a natural theology, as well as a profound doctrine of personal existence but these are not presented in any systematic fashion. They are open thoughts which are incomplete and this is the major weakness in Marcel's philosophy. However, if his works are integrated into an already established philosophy which is in consonance with his basic premises but does not supply a full development of them, then we might say that this weakness is also his strength. Marcel has described himself as a "philosopher of the threshold" and, viewed in this light, we can say that his philosophy opens the door to profound reflection. He has drawn attention to the unique human person enmeshed in the problems of life and this is the original contribution of his doctrines. Although this may be a posture which encourages frustration on the part of the one who is searching for the answer, Marcel sees it as the only answer and the only posture, for he is wary of all "isms" and he rejects the attitude that truth is

found only in one quarter, being fully conscious of the fact that absolute truth cannot be enjoyed on this earth. He cannot be reproached for his personal stand nor for the incompleteness of his philosophy since he, himself, is not fully satisfied with it and satisfaction would be contrary to the intention which vitalizes all of his writings and would destroy the efficacy of the phenomenological method which he employs.

The use and efficacy of this method may be questioned. There is no doubt that it is in accord with the type of philosophy which Marcel espouses. The analysis and description of experiences in concrete situations leads one to look to the medium of the drama for expression, but in so doing are we not in the realm of pure subjectivity? The subjective description of concrete situations and phenomena limits the application of the subject's experiences to himself and there is no justification for the transference of this set of experiences to any or all of mankind. One's primary concern here must be with philosophical truth. The only way in which truth, which is one, will be recognized universally will be through the objectivity on which it is based. Marcel's preoccupation with his "untiring battle against the spirit of abstraction" and objectification has opened the door to criticism against his method. In his use of the phenomenological method he attempts to describe

situations or experiences which he has encountered and his purpose here is to avoid the representation of concrete individuals as abstract beings in abstract situations. His metaphysics is descriptive. His critique of Rationalism and Positivism and his proposal of a concrete philosophy which concentrates on the situation and experience of the person himself in order to recognize fully, illumine, and deepen this experience may be interpreted as subjectivist. He does, however, acknowledge passim in his works the validity and function of analysis and objective knowledge but not sufficiently to avoid the subjectivist criticism. His acceptance and reliance on faith seems to deny the ability of the speculative intellect to attain certainty and seems to replace reason with personal desire and emotion. His metaphysics is certainly not the traditional concept of metaphysics. However, it would be unfair to judge him by the traditional standards since his philosophy must be considered more of a mysticism than a metaphysics. His philosophy is not directed to the study of ens in se but to beings taken in their individuality.

Marcel's thought is basically a reflection on experience. But to be profitable to others he had to find a means of transposing his own unique experiences into concepts or situations in which everyone, upon reflection, would be able to find himself. He has attempted to

universalize concrete experiences. The phenomenological method is only the beginning of Marcel's search for in the examples which he uses he brings into relief the implications of his experience. He digs under experience in order to find the profound meaning in it. This approach is implied in his description of transcendence.

In his search for meaning, Marcel has attempted to restore to words their original value and for this reason he often has recourse to foreign words when the proper French word has lost its pristine significance or is unable to portray vividly enough his unique thought. Marcel is a purist in the use of vocabulary and attempts to discover the original and concrete meaning of words while enriching their connotations. His thought often centers around the use of a particular word and the devaluation that has occurred through common usage, words such as "encounter", "having", "love", "receiving". Marcel's words are charged with meaning and open vistas of reflection.

A plethora of examples and metaphors is likewise characteristic of Marcel's method. These not only serve the purpose of illustration but are necessary to reflection itself. They underscore the sense of lived experience and the trials of a being in a situation. For this reason his recourse to the theatre is an essential aspect of his concrete philosophy. His use of examples is geared to stir

the mind to reflection on what is involved in these examples, what is the meaning of the situation in which man finds himself.

Marcel has received a great deal of criticism in many quarters regarding his negative attitude toward technological advances. It is difficult, however, to accuse him outrightly on this account or to label him a fanatic since such a posture is a matter of emphasis. Instead of concentrating on the positive contributions of technology to man's life, he has underscored the dangers resulting from the engrossment of man in these advances. He seems to proceed as if technology and "having" were evils in themselves. His intent would have been clarified had he positioned them in a set of values and avoided the tendency to condemnation. However, to accentuate the negative elements does not imply the elimination of the positive. He does not deny the contributions of technical reason in the attainment of the ends of human life but he is suspicious of the abstractive and objectifying mentality of the scientist. He provides a good example of the man who is unable to integrate what C. P. Snow refers to as the "two cultures". The philosopher and the scientist are placed on two different levels and their modes of thinking keep them apart. We might attribute this attitude to the method which Marcel has chosen for his philosophy and to an insufficient positive evaluation of what he labels "primary reflection".

Marcel's concept of the scientist is limited. He portrays the scientist as an individualist who regards science and the scientific as absolutes and is unable to extricate himself from the web which his thinking has woven around him. In his zeal to call our attention to the dangers inherent in the scientific mentality, Marcel reaches the extreme and neglects the fact that this attitude is embodied in a human being even though this being may not measure up to the criteria which Marcel has established for his concept of person. It seems that such an individual will have great difficulty in attaining the kingdom of "being" since he is engrossed in the kingdom of "having", the kingdom of "problem" rather than the kingdom of "mystery". These "camels" will truly have to bend in order to pass through the biblical "eye of the needle". Marcel has not dealt sufficiently with the scientist as a person and it is difficult to imagine that this man of love, this man of communion would gratuitously impugn all scientists or universalize in such a fashion. A philosophy such as Marcel's should distinguish between the thinking of the scientist and technical advances and assert the positive value which is deserved by each.

The all-pervading power of technology which is embodied in a state of technocracy is the prime target of Marcel's barbs. He battles against the claim to primacy which is promoted by technocrats and denounces the inhumanity

that results from the functionalization of man. Marcel promotes the primacy of being in opposition to the primacy of having fostered by the technocratic mentality. In Marcel's descriptions, however, it is difficult to discern the resting place of technology and the start of technocracy.

The Christian overtones of Marcel's philosophy are the result of the historical situation in which we live. We cannot deny the influence of Christian culture on his thought but this is not the basis of his doctrines but only "a fertilizing principle", according to his words. ^A A profitable study could be made of the relationship between Christian thinking and the explanation which Marcel offers for his concrete approaches.

In summary we may look upon Marcel's philosophy as an apologia of the person. His concentration on the concrete individual and his phenomenological analysis of intersubjectivity has brought into relief the essential dignity of the person and the value of concrete approaches in life. He has presented to us a world which is not reducible to the scientist's microscope but a beautiful world of life and mystery. His approach to the person is a holistic rather than atomistic one. His contribution to philosophical thought lies in his analysis and description of the person as a total being and in the necessity of intersubjective communion which has as its basis the fact that all men are

brothers because they have the same Father and that self-fulfillment, not achievement, lies in others, that is, it is through others that we attain the fullness of being and man's freedom is most fully expressed in the service of others.

Marcel's concern with the person in his relationships is also the concern of contemporary approaches to education. Does Marcel have anything to contribute in this regard to educational considerations? Is his approach different than that taken by other educators? These questions will be the subject of investigation in Part Three.

PART III

CONTEMPORARY EMPHASIS IN EDUCATION AND MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

The history of education has been a history of emphasis revolving around the problem of the rights of the individual and the rights of society. The demands and needs of the individual are often in conflict with the demands and needs of society as a whole. When such conflict arises, one finds a prominent trend in education to emphasize the rights of one over the other. There is evidence today that the emphasis in education is in favour of the individual. The "child-centered" approach is reflected in such programs as individualized instruction, non-graded schools, self-evaluation, self-competition, the encouragement of difference and the stress on creativity.

The value of the human person is not a new educational emphasis, but it is a contemporary one, related to the approaches of educational reformers like Rousseau, Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey. More recently this emphasis is evident in the 1962 A.S.C.D. Yearbook¹ which regards the business of education as "... the fullest

¹ Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, 256 p.

possible flowering of human potentiality..."² and which attempts to explore the implications of propositions regarding the adequate person for teaching and learning. The importance of the individual is further stressed in recent educational literature. This Yearbook was chosen as being indicative of the stress placed on the individual in present-day education. Moreover, it is written from the viewpoint of "Third-Force" psychology or perceptual-existential psychology and can therefore serve as a basis of comparison with Marcel's existential philosophy. This comparison should show that Marcel's philosophy can add a foundation and depth to the recommendations made by the authors of the Yearbook.

The innovations proposed by contemporary educators are geared to the self-fulfillment or self-actualization of the individual. Concentration on the innovations themselves might lead to a hodge-podge of techniques rather than the rationale for such innovations and for this reason a thematic approach to contemporary emphasis will be taken as a means of comparing the concern of both Gabriel Marcel and the Committee of the Yearbook with the development of each unique human being. The themes chosen will be those investigated in the Yearbook which are related to the development of an individual and his relationship to others. This will be

2 Ibid., p. 2.

complemented by other references emphasizing the contemporary approach.

No claim is made to be exhaustive in this treatment. The major ideas of the themes will be explored from the perceptual and Marcel's approach. The following themes will serve as a basis of comparison: Self-fulfillment; Dignity, Integrity and Autonomy; Creativity and Conformity; Identification. Chapter XIII will center around the comparison of the meaning of the term self-fulfillment. The basis of dignity, the concepts of dignity and autonomy will be considered in Chapter XIV. The apparent conflict between conformity and creativity will form the substance of Chapter XV and in Chapter XVI the concept of identification or interpersonal relations will be investigated.

CHAPTER XIII

SELF-FULFILLMENT

Psychologists and educators alike realize that each person is a unique individual, different in many ways from any other, and presenting individual concerns which must be taken into account if there is to be successful development. It would appear that this is an impossible task for educators, however, due to the expansion of educational opportunities and to the large number of people in the schools at the present time. The task of the schools is particularly difficult when one looks at the myriad complexity of the backgrounds and potentialities which is to be found in any single classroom. It cannot be assumed that identical experiences will accommodate all of these human beings.

In order to facilitate the development of an individual, his needs must be diagnosed and met by the teacher. The importance of this individual demands a person-to-person relationship, not a teacher to class relationship. One of the basic facts which educators must consider is that failure to meet individual needs at each stage of development will curtail the growth of the individual toward self-actualization or fulfillment.

1. The Perceptual Approach

The view of man as a "person-becoming" is emphasized in the title of the 1962 A.S.C.D. Yearbook.¹ The individual perceives himself and his environment in a particular way, he reacts to this perception and by this reaction he is forming himself, he is "becoming". The four authors have expressed this concept in various ways: "... Every person is, in part, 'his own project', and makes himself";² "... He sees himself as an ongoing part of a world in movement [...] in process of becoming";³ "... The person who is in the process of becoming is [...] a human being in flow, in process, rather than having achieved some state";⁴ "... People discover their self-concepts from the kinds of experience they have had with life; not from telling, but from experience."⁵

1 Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A. 1962, 256 p.

2 Abraham H. Maslow, "Some Basic Propositions of a Growth and Self-Actualization Psychology", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 36.

3 Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self" Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 19.

4 Carl R. Rogers, "Toward Becoming a Fully Functioning Person", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 31.

5 Arthur W. Combs, "A Perceptual View of the Adequate Personality", in Arthur W. Combs, Op. Cit., p. 53.

This emphasis on the "person-becoming" has led to theories concerning the constitution of the self-actualized or fully-functioning person and the importance of this concept of "becoming" to the educative process.

From his background of client-centered therapy, Rogers has made certain observations as to what human beings appear to be striving for when they feel free to choose their own direction. He gives the following picture of the optimum human person: He is a human being in process sensitively open to all of his experiences, he experiences in the present, with immediacy, able to live in his feelings and reactions of the moment, he lives freely, subjectively, in an existential confrontation of this moment of life. He is trustingly able to permit his total organism to function freely in selecting behaviour which in this moment of time will be most generally and genuinely satisfying. He is a creative person who lives a life of greater richness than the ordinary man. He has an underlying confidence in himself as a trustworthy instrument for encountering life.⁶

There are lacunae in Roger's theory. He does not sufficiently elaborate the basis of the confidence which the fully-functioning person supposedly possesses nor the principles upon which such self-reliance develops. He

6 Carl R. Rogers, Loc. Cit., p. 21-33.

seems to place too much trust in the individual's ability to make decisions on the basis of feeling or emotion in stating that doing what "... feels right proves to be a competent and trustworthy guide to behaviour which is truly satisfying".⁷ The implication here is that man will reach self-fulfillment, given the freedom to do so.

The qualities of the fully-functioning self enumerated by Kelley are akin to the description of the emergence of the ego made by Marcel. "The self 'looks out' upon the surrounding scene largely in terms of its own enhancement or defence. It tends to extend in the direction of that which promises to make it better off. It withdraws from that which seems likely to endanger it."⁸ The characteristics listed by Kelley closely resemble those enumerated by Rogers. He looks upon the fully functioning personality as one who thinks well of himself and of others; he sees his stake in others. He sees others as opportunities, not for exploitation, but for the building of self. He sees himself as part of a world in movement - in process of becoming. He sees the value of mistakes and develops and holds human values. He knows no other way to live except in keeping with h:

7 Ibid., p. 27.

8 Earl C. Kelley, Loc. Cit., p. 14-15.

values and he is cast in a creative role.⁹ The basis of hope, according to Kelley, is the fact that today has no meaning except in relation to an expected tomorrow. The hope with which Kelley concerns himself is that of a possible improvement in the lot of the individual:

... The person who accepts change and expects it, behaves differently from the person who seeks to get everything organized so that it will be fixed from now on. He will not search for the firm foundation on which he can stand for the rest of his life. He will realize that the only thing he knows for sure about the future is that tomorrow will be different from today and that he can anticipate this difference with hopeful expectation.¹⁰

Optimism is supposedly engendered by this view, but if man is to be such a rootless individual, dependent upon what the winds of tomorrow will bring, without any firm foundation on which to stand, is there room for anything other than despair? Once again, no foundation is laid for the attainment of self-fulfillment. It seems to consist of measuring up to a standard set by others.

Four characteristics of the perceptual field which always seem to underlie the behaviour of truly adequate persons are listed by Combs. These are, "(a) a positive view of self, (b) identification with others, (c) openness to experience and acceptance and (d) a rich and available

⁹ Ibid., p. 18-20.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 19.

perceptual field".¹¹ In another of his works, he has particularly stressed the necessity of a positive self-concept since "the individual's self is the center of his world, the point of origin for all behaviour".¹² Adequate persons, according to Combs, see themselves as persons of integrity and dignity, of worth and importance and they are likely to manifest a deep respect for the dignity and integrity of other persons and a strong sense of justice and moral probity because they would injure their own selves if they were to behave in ways likely to be harmful or injurious to others.

Maslow¹³ has enumerated certain basic propositions which are essential in one's striving for self-actualization. His essential propositions are similar to those which were elaborated by the other "Third Force" psychologists but indicate a synthesis of philosophy and psychology. The acceptance of self and the need to be loved is essential to psychological health. "No psychological health is possible unless this essential core (self) of the person is fundamentally accepted, loved and respected by others and by himself."¹⁴

11 Arthur W. Combs, "A Perceptual View of the Personality", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 51.

12 Idem, The Professional Education of Teachers. A Perceptual View of Teacher Preparation, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1965, p. 14.

13 Abraham H. Maslow, Loc. Cit., p. 34-49.

14 Ibid., p. 36.

This is the first step on the road to self-actualization. Growth toward selfhood depends on many conditions, but it can be achieved, according to Maslow. Once the self has been achieved, it is easier to transcend self and the level of selfishness:

The achievement of self-actualization (in the sense of autonomy) paradoxically makes more possible the transcendence of self, and of self-consciousness and of selfishness. It makes it easier for the person to be homonomous, i.e. to merge himself as a part in a larger whole than himself...¹⁵

His concept of self-actualization is synonymous to a certain state of perfection.

The quest for self and its relationship to education has been investigated by Montagu¹⁶ who feels that the focus in the western family is upon the individual and his growth in egocentricity and that strong emotional ties are usually developed between parents and children in a far from healthy manner and will hinder the emergence of the self. He sees the educators' function as one which will

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁶ Ashley Montagu, "Quest for Self", in Childhood Education, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of Sept. 1964, p. 3-8.

... enable the individual successfully to negotiate the journey in search of self by giving him sustenances and stimulation to pursue that journey as creatively as possible. This requires teachers who are themselves able to love--for it is by being loved that one learns to love just as one learns to speak by being spoken to. Those teachers will not only communicate the meaning of love to their pupils but it will be their task also to communicate through their own example the facts and the theory upon which human relations are based; in other words, the science that is to say the theory the art and the practice of human relations.¹⁷

The emphasis placed upon the teacher as the exemplar is very significant in the process of education. It implies that teachers must constantly work on themselves before they are exposed to others and that the emphasis on knowledge and skills is secondary to the emphasis on the person of the teacher for

... we need to recognize that the three R's can never be anything more than skills, techniques which are quite secondary to their main purpose--the maximum realization of whatever potentials the individual is endowed with of self-fulfillment.¹⁸

The motivating factor in the quest for self is the need to love and to be loved. Montagu's definition of love, however, as "... behaviour calculated to confer survival benefits in a creatively enlarging manner upon others"¹⁹ is quite nebulous.

17 Ibid., p. 5.

18 Ibid., p. 7.

19 Ibid., p. 4.

In a contrary vein, Goodlad²⁰ stresses the necessity of self-transcendancy as an element in the understanding of the self and that this should be a school objective present at all levels. He attempts to avoid excessive emphasis on one "self".

... By self-transcendancy as a school objective, I mean learning to go beyond love of self to love of others. We can do this only as we understand ourselves, but if we stop there we become narcissists and so we must somehow help youngsters turn outward from themselves and in so doing, achieve self-understanding.²¹

This approach presupposes a certain attitude and commitment on the part of the teacher in regard to everything which takes place within the classroom so that the notion of a subject-oriented atmosphere or the notion of a certain body of material to be covered would be alien to the teacher who accepted this outlook.

A plea for the integration of subjects is put forward by Applegate²² who looks upon homogeneous grouping in the classroom as being detrimental to the self since it seems to place a ceiling on the aspirations of the child;

20 John I. Goodlad, "Understanding the Self in the School Setting", in Childhood Education, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of Sept. 1964, p. 9-15.

21 Ibid., p. 12.

22 Mauree Applegate, "Expressing the Self", in Childhood Education, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of Sept. 1964, p. 15-19.

"... I still reiterate that integration of the self will be accomplished only when there ceases to be a dichotomy between education and life and between natural learning and school learning."²³ This type of reconciliation will only occur when it is possible to determine the methods by which formal learning can serve as a continuation of the natural means used by the child, since we do know that a tremendous amount of learning occurs in the pre-school period.

Myers indicates that the process of "becoming" is the continuous interaction of the individual with his total environment. "... The Act of becoming produces a sensitivity to others and the environment and enhances a continuous flow of experiences which result from interaction of self with all other forces."²⁴ The basis of this sensitivity is not elaborated, however.

A critique of the assumptions upon which certain Perceptual psychologists based their theories of self-fulfillment has been made by Kennedy.²⁵ He contends that it is not safe for purposes of fostering desirable self

23 Ibid., p. 18.

24 Kent E. Myers, "Becoming: For Child and Teacher - An Ever-Changing Self-Image", in Childhood Education, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of Sept. 1964, p. 37.

25 D. A. Kennedy, "Self-Direction - What Direction?", in Educational Leadership, Vol. 24, issue of October 1966, p. 10-12.

direction to depend upon an inherent tendency of the human organism to move toward self-fulfillment.

Individuals need help to develop self-directed behaviour which is directed toward acceptable goals, for "... there is no reason to believe, for example, that the criminal may not be as self-directed as the law-abiding person".²⁶ Self direction is therefore in need of guidance. He seems to believe that environmental conditions appear to be more important to an individual's degree of self-direction than any presumed inherent tendency to develop toward self-fulfillment. Thus there will be a need for considerable structure in the early stages of development so that the individual will be able to direct himself at a later stage with some guidelines. Kennedy is apprehensive of the degree of trust placed in the human organism. He feels that Combs rejects the notion that man is basically evil (as did Rousseau) and implies that he is basically good. The view which Kennedy proposes is that man is neither inherently good nor bad but can only be labeled thus in terms of behaviour, which is appropriate or inappropriate to societal requirements.²⁷ Society thus becomes the arbiter of morality. He makes the tongue in cheek remark that "... stress placed on the 'man

26 Ibid., p. 10.

27 Ibid., p. 12.

is good because he inherently tends to self-actualize' would mean that we did not have to teach but merely sit back and wait for good things to happen".²⁸

It is interesting to note in this connection that we have the ageless problem of original sin rearing its head and the extremes being brought out into the open - the affirmation of the innate goodness of the child and the accusation of innate depravity. Kennedy attempts to steer a middle course and places the decision at the feet of society.

The majority of the authors considered place great stress on the protection of the self-concept and the promotion of the positive self-concept of the individual, looking upon society as the provider of this protection, stressing the innate goodness of the individual and the realization of self-fulfillment through society. It would seem that if all the environmental conditions are right then the individual would attain self-perfection. Others exist, then, for the enhancement of the individual. There is an attempt to develop characteristics in the individual which are evident in the description of self-actualizing people.

28 Ibid.

2. Marcel's Approach

Gabriel Marcel takes a different outlook. The concept of fulfillment or self-realization of an individual is understood by Marcel as taking place not necessarily on a material level but on a higher plane. For this reason he can believe that self-fulfillment can be accomplished by self-sacrifice, even physical self-sacrifice. The physical self-sacrifice will only be confused with self-slaughter by a person who looks upon the act "from the outside", from its material aspect, but the person carrying out the act has the feeling that "... given his own situation and that of everything dear to him, he realizes his own nature most completely, he most completely is in the act of giving his life away".²⁹ Marcel notes a distinction between the physical effect of the act itself and the inner significance of the act, so that a person may, by objective standards, be committing a foolish act, when, because of the meaning of the act for the person himself, he is reaching self-fulfillment. The criterion by which the act is judged is a significant feature.

The establishment of tasks which an individual must perform to meet the criteria set down by society for

²⁹ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 205.

"fulfillment" may, in reality, be a disintegrating factor in the person's becoming. "... My self-fulfilment takes place at another, an invisible level..."³⁰ It is important here to transcend the categories of biology and external manifestation and when we reach a level of consideration which is beyond the material, the level of mystery, we can truly understand the value of self-transcendence as being constitutive of the person.

But in a world in which man is evaluated by the function which he performs and which, in turn, degrades him, such a concept can only be understood by the process which Marcel describes as secondary reflection - the "recuperative" process which elevates man's thinking to the realm of being. For "... being is the culmination of hope, the experience of being is its fulfilment..."³¹ Being is linked to value. Fulfillment is to be found in the realm of being but to the functionalized mind it usually consists in the accomplishment of a task which is nothing more than a task, a unit of production in which there can be no interior identification - a task which a machine can fulfill. In functionalized activity there can be no true creation and yet "... fulfilment

³⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

³¹ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. II, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 50.

can take on a positive meaning only from the point of view of creation".³² Creation, in this sense, must not necessarily be associated with a product. Creation can exist without any object bearing witness to it.

Moreover, fulfillment is not to be confused with perfection for the latter word connotes something which has taken on a definitive form, something finished or brought to a close (such as the self-actualized person) and it presents itself as such to the one who observes it. We could certainly use this word in connection with a statue or building but not with a human being. "... Perfection is self-sufficient, it has no need to send us on to anything beyond itself..."³³ There is the danger that the use of the word perfection in relation to being may be interpreted as a whole closed in on itself. This "whole" is not Marcel's concept of fulfillment since "... fulness is not to be confused with totality".³⁴ It is to be understood in the sense of "becoming" but never quite reaching, for the realm of being is concerned with faith, hope, love which are immeasurable. "... It would seem better to admit that what we have called fulfillment should be interpreted in this

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., p. 24.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

context as a mode of participation in...³⁵ Marcel finds it difficult to fill in the gap since it depends on whether we are or are not in the realm of the spiritual. His meaning, however, is clear since fullness, as such, has no true meaning if it is considered from the angle of an objective or descriptive knowledge.

The concept of participation is extremely important in fulfillment since it mitigates the emphasis on the self, le moi, contained in the expression self-fulfillment or self-actualization and transfers the emphasis to the concept of self-transcendence, to others. It is in and through^{others} that man fulfills himself. The same concept is expressed by Frankl in his statement that "... self-actualization cannot be attained if it is made an end in itself, but only as a side effect of self-transcendence".³⁶ In Marcel's view man "becomes", or knows himself only through participation in intersubjective encounters with others.

The litanies of characteristics of self-actualized people enumerated by the perceptual psychologists are very instructive but they leave one with an impression of a finished product rather than serving as guides to the

35 Ibid., p. 51.

36 Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning, An Introduction to Logotherapy, New York, Washington Square Press, 1963, p. 175.

acquisition of various virtues necessary to the attainment of this state. The investigations made by the various authors have, however, provided significant avenues of exploration. They have been very positive and emphatic in their consideration of the importance of self-knowledge in the attainment of adequacy or fulfillment. The role of others in this process has been proposed as a necessary consideration in the enhancement of the self as well as placing the person in a creative role, i.e. creative of his own self, being his own "project" but the concept of freedom is extreme. The stress on the necessity of each person as being alive or open to experience so that he may "live life to the fullest" and see meaning in all the events and happenings in his life is an existential challenge advanced by them. The proposition that authentic human beings are trustworthy and live in accordance with the values which they have chosen to accept as important is another area of consideration found in these theories. In essence we have a humanistic psychological approach to the person. These theories provide us with an approach to the whole field of education which is thought-provoking since it demands a renewal of certain traditional ways of perceiving the constitutive element of the teacher, of the child, of the learning process and of the functions which the schools must perform. It is a child-centered orientation of the

teacher which comes about only after the teacher himself sees the need of introspection and remedial measures. They have brought about a change in emphasis and it is hoped that it will lead the way to the foundations upon which the dignity and integrity of the person is based.

There are certain elements in these theories and in modern trends in education which must be challenged in order to avoid a superficial approach to the person and to education. History has shown that a secular humanistic approach to others will eventually throw the subject back upon himself as the center of all activity and value. Experience and reflection will discover the self-centeredness guised in the devotion to others which is based on a naturalistic orientation to man, whether it be intellectual, emotional or social. The rousseauesque dogmatism concerning the nature of human nature which is implied in these theories is not to be countered with the doctrine of innate depravity but with an approach which will take into account all theories of the nature of the human being, especially the religious, together with its interpretation of the effects which are the lot of "fallen but redeemed" man.

The renewal of the role of the self in its positive concept in education must be credited to the work of these men, among others, and this is, at least, a beginning in the field of psychology which seems to be moving more and more

towards the parent discipline - philosophy. It is in the integration of these two as well as related fields that progress can be made. This is the area in which Marcel's philosophy can provide a basis for the proposals of the perceptual psychologists.

These theories indicate a reaction to the behaviouristic and mechanistic approach which has plagued psychology and education for too long a time. But what is the rationale for such emphasis on the individual? Why should he be the center of our concern? What attributes make him worthy of such special treatment?

CHAPTER XIV

DIGNITY, INTEGRITY, AUTONOMY

Throughout history man's dignity has relied on various bases, on certain abilities he possessed, on birth-rights, on intelligence, and also on the concept that he is a child of God. The outlook on the value of a human being will determine the practices which are employed in the educational system.

1. The Perceptual Approach

The basis for the dignity of an individual is not stated in the A.S.C.D. Yearbook of 1962. An assumption that all individuals are worthy of respect is proposed without any reference to principles upon which this assumption is made. Dignity is considered as a value which is bestowed upon a person as a result of experiences with those around him.¹

An individual's autonomy and self-unity come as a result of his acceptance of himself as a trustworthy instrument to carry out his purposes. These qualities are reflected in a consistent feeling and mode of action indicating that the individual is basically an integrated being and that

1. Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus For Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 215.

all the forces within him are acting harmoniously.² The three concepts, dignity, integrity, autonomy, are learned from associations with significant people and are "... in large measure, concomitants of the environment which impinges positively upon the individual, reflecting especially the feelings about self as they emerge in relation with human beings".³

Following the dictum nemo dat quod non habet, the Yearbook committee feels that the individual will only become aware of these concepts if the teacher embodies these values in himself. This applies as well to the educational hierarchy. Thus the need for constant professional interaction so that administrators and teachers will nourish these values in each other. In turn, this relationship will be mirrored in a larger social context.⁴

Certain practices hinder the acquisition of dignity and integrity. These practices are related basically to the smooth and efficient operation of the system rather than being concerned with the needs of the individual: authoritarianism; teaching certain subjects at a given age or grade regardless of readiness; concentration on external standards

2 Ibid., p. 214.

3 Ibid., p. 221.

4 Ibid., p. 216-219.

in promotion; imposition of rules and regulations without cooperation in deciding them; arbitrary methods of grouping and segregation; treatment of children as subordinates whose goals, ideas and activities have no value in the adult world; report-card grades; imposition of values from above; unrealistic use of time; acceleration and failure.⁵ All of these interfere with the individual's autonomy and foster a spirit of unworthiness.

2. Marcel's Approach

A basis for human dignity is established in the philosophy of Marcel. He does not posit dignity in a vacuum or as a gratuitous assertion but emphasizes the sacral character of human dignity and the fraternity that should exist among all men since they are brothers in the fatherhood of God. The emphasis on the person in the educative process is justified by this principle. Marcel would likewise reject any practices which would sublimate the individual to the efficient operation of a system and to any impersonal attitude which degrades or dehumanizes him. It was his concern with the individual person and his outlook on the dangers of dehumanization which are inherent in the "spirit of abstraction" that caused him to react vehemently to the suggestion

⁵ Ibid., p. 230-232.

that there could be an education of the masses:

... Mais justement les masses n'existent et ne se développent (suivant des lois au fond purement mécaniques) que bien en deçà du plan où l'intelligence et l'amour sont possibles. Pourquoi en est-il ainsi? Parce que les masses sont de l'humain dégradé, elles sont un état dégradé de l'humain. Ne cherchons pas à nous persuader qu'une éducation des masses est possible; c'est là une contradiction dans les termes. Seul l'individu, ou plus exactement, la personne est éduicable. Partout ailleurs il n'y a place que pour un dressage.⁶

The person, then is the subject of education. Institutions exist for the person, not the person for the institution.

Certain procedures in the realm of psychology also fall under the indictment of Marcel as being detrimental to human dignity. He does not condemn the field of psychology in toto but rather the contribution which a particular approach to the individual has had in the process of depersonalization. In particular he focuses his attention on the use of tests in America in areas in which they are proposed as techniques of evaluation of qualities which cannot truly be evaluated. One of these areas is that of intelligence, understanding and affectivity. The objection to the use of tests in this area is grave, even decisive.⁷

⁶ Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 13.

⁷ Idem, Le déclin de la sagesse, Paris, Plon, 1954, p. 17.

The concepts of dignity and integrity, although not identical, are indissolubly linked in Marcel's philosophy. The integrated man is master of himself and in perfect possession of himself. This in no way implies complacency or self-sufficiency.⁸ The danger to integrity lies in a process of enucleation which can be set in operation by impersonal modes of dealing with the individual in his education. Marcel emphasizes the necessity of a counterweight to the technical trend in education which does not concern itself with values which are of supreme importance to the individual. He does not suggest a return to the teaching of the classics as conceived at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. He does feel, however, that those who have been subjected almost exclusively to a technical training are more susceptible to propaganda and techniques of degradation than those who have been educated in the liberal arts.⁹

The objection may be raised, in defence, that Marcel's criticisms are levelled against the system of education in France and such negative criticism does not apply to America. Investigation would show that the same criticisms can and do

⁸ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 162.

⁹ Idem, Le déclin de la sagesse, p. 6.

apply to our own system and we can certainly recognize the dangers of a mass system of education in depersonalizing the whole process of development. Although Marcel has recently admitted of a certain evolution in his thought by asserting that his approach to the techniques of degradation was a little too hostile, he still stressed that it is easy to attach too little importance to the ends to which these techniques should remain subordinated.¹⁰

The basis of human dignity is a spiritual one, not a naturalistic doctrine of co-existence. The sacredness of the person does not lie in a nebulous personal relationship, according to Marcel, but in the fact that man has been created in the image of God. "... ne serait-on pas fondé à admettre que si la personne est digne d'inspirer le respect, c'est uniquement dans la mesure où elle bénéficie encore de l'aura qui entoure la créature formée à l'image du Créateur?"¹¹ The notion of the person and his rights has been used by men who were motivated by the "will to power" and the desire to oppress their neighbours for partisan purposes, but this does not negate the validity of the concept itself and it must be stressed in education.

¹⁰ Entretiens, Paul Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, p. 100.

¹¹ Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, p. 175.

... à condition bien entendu qu'elles ne restent pas de pures abstractions, ne se réduisent pas à des mots, mais au contraire tente de s'incarner dans les mœurs et les institutions, constituent la seule sauvegarde imaginable contre un état de barbarie technocratisée qui est peut-être ce que l'on peut concevoir de plus hideux...¹²

Marcel's critique of technology which was presented in Chapter 8 is applicable as well to present-day educational systems which are tending to become more and more bureaucratic because of increases in size. His proposals will therefore be of great significance since he looks upon a school as one of the institutions in which there is hope of counteracting the dangers of technology.

The first step in the process of personalizing teaching and the restoration of dignity comes from within the teacher himself. It consists of the personal realization of the sacral quality of each human being. This demands a sensitivity, an awareness, a reawakening, and perhaps even a conversion together with the resolve to reform himself interiorly, to reorient himself to the dignity of the persons who are exposed to him. It may demand a re-dedication or commitment to his vocation.

The second step is to work in small groups within our own classroom, our school and our profession. For "... c'est seulement au sein de groupes restreints et animés

¹² Ibid.

d'un esprit d'amour que l'universel peut effectivement prendre corps".¹³ These groups would serve as examples or "lights" to others. The necessity of personalizing relationships with others is quite evident. Sonderquist, as well, envisaged the support necessary for the individual when he states:

But the person cannot prevail in his individuality unless he has some kind of group support. Since this support is not often found in the big collections of which he is, perforce, a unit, he must seek it in smaller and more intimate associations with common creative concerns which are not subordinated to the administrative exigences of the large organization.¹⁴

He sees implications of this approach for the regular curriculum as well as extra-curricular activities.

Protection of the dignity of the individual from the impersonal forces which can dehumanize him is a goal of education implied in Marcel's philosophy. This has special implications for the teacher who is cast in the role of a guide or director of the development of those entrusted to his care. The individual is cast in a creative role in regard to establishing his autonomy but his struggle may be hampered by the demands made upon him to conform to certain norms of society. What then, is the posture expected of the individual in this situation?

¹³ Ibid., p. 202.

¹⁴ Harold O. Sonderquist, The Person and Education, Columbus, Charles E. Merrill, 1964, p. 149.

CHAPTER XV

CONFORMITY AND CREATIVITY

Great stress has relatively recently been placed on the concept of creativity. Traditionally, creativity was regarded as a special gift or talent possessed by an elite few. This impression was due to the belief that creativity was associated with some kind of product, a book, a work of art etc. Viewing it in this light we could see that few people were creative. With a shift in consideration from a product to a process, it is recognized that everyone possesses creativity but in varying degrees.

In philosophy, the process of self-fulfillment or "becoming" is related to the concept of freedom. If man creates himself, then he must be free to become what he can become, to "self-actualize". The interpretation of the degree of freedom results in the foundation of certain schools of thought which can have a profound effect on educational practice.

1. The Perceptual Approach

The emphasis on freedom in regard to "becoming" is strikingly evident throughout the Yearbook but it is held as the sine qua non in regard to creativity. The committee regards creativity as the epitome of virtue and looks upon

conformity as evil. "... For conformity and creativity are essentially antithetical--what produces one tends to destroy the other. Conformity calls for restriction, order, direction, control; creativity for freedom, experimentation, expression and facilitation."¹ In their zeal to promote the most favourable conditions for self-fulfillment, they may have reached an extreme in placing conformity in opposition to creativity. But this approach reflects the concept of freedom which guides all their recommendations. "... Man will become the best that he can be, when we have found the ways to set him free..."² The implication here is that man, personally, should be completely free to choose rather than accepting restrictions imposed on him for the good of "society". This is an isolationist view of the concept of freedom, an equation of conformity with passivity and creativity with action.

Moustakas is also extreme in making the distinction between natural limits and imposed limitations:

1 Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 144.

2 Ibid., p. 143.

... Limits provide the structure through which individual identity emerges and grows. They enable the organism to use its capacities within its own defined structure and are meaningful as the inherent requirements of a situation. Limitations are induced and imposed from without and are external and extraneous. They are blocks and deterrents to growth and hinder creative emergence.³

The development of creativity demands an openness to experience as a prerequisite. For this reason the committee of the Yearbook sees the role of the teacher as a helper rather than a director. Creativity requires an awareness and sensitivity to all experience on the part of the teacher so that he may help his students reach a level of reflection which is beyond that which is apparent in observation of facts alone.⁴

The atmosphere which encourages creativity is one in which differences and flexibility are made possible, where each person is respected and a climate of cooperative interaction is supported in such a way that the feeling of belonging and communication is fostered.⁵ Aware that the same idea may be expressed in a variety of ways, the teacher will not be insistent on a static answer. "... The teacher, himself, is creative in that he is creating an atmosphere as he

³ Clark E. Moustakas, Creativity and Conformity, Princeton, Van Nostrand, 1967, xiii-142 p., p. 37.

⁴ Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 149-150.

⁵ Ibid., p. 146-149.

arranges, organizes, interprets questions or⁴ directs..."⁶
Creativity does not occur in a vacuum. Information and facts are necessary before "insight" can be attained. The acquisition of tools and techniques for exploration and discovery is essential in the promotion of creative endeavour but besides these techniques one needs to be able to think critically and evaluate data rather than accept "facts" alone, a posture which is little more than indoctrination.⁷ This "spirit of enquiry" can be applied to all aspects of the curriculum, art, science, mathematics and the social sciences.

2. Marcel's Approach

Marcel would see no contradiction between conformity and creativity but would oppose uniformity to creativity when uniformity indicates an assent which is made without reflection. This type of assent is characteristic of the "mass-man", not the person. The robot-like actions of the individual who has been seduced by the techniques of degradation is a block to the emergence of creative action since such action demands a "recuperative" process on the part of the person to transcend the objective data of primary reflection and to

6 Ibid., p. 149.

7 Ibid., p. 153-154.

reach the level of being. The level of being is the level of commitment and responsibility which is characteristic of the person.⁸

One of the dangers involved with engrossment in the "spirit of abstraction" or the "technical mentality" is that it cripples reflective thought which is necessary in the development of creativity. Lulled by the techniques of degradation employed in the realm of "having", it is difficult to be alive to the real world of "being":

... Le développement ou l'invasion de la technique ne peut pas ne pas entraîner pour l'homme l'oblivion, l'effacement progressif de ce monde de mystère qui est à la fois celui de la présence et celui de l'espérance.⁹

This involvement in the realm of having or scientific analysis to the neglect of that which is beyond analysis, mystery, has been decried in the educational process by Stevens in regard to the teaching of English but it may be applied to other areas as well. Recognizing the importance of a mastery of specific knowledge and effective modes of teaching, he adds the necessary ingredient of a mysterious element which is drawn from deep down in the teacher, infusing all that he has consciously acquired. This element has "something

⁸ This concept is presented in Chapter VII, infra.

⁹ Gabriel Marcel, Les hommes contre l'humain, Paris, La Colombe, 1951, p. 70.

to do with an awed respect for each unique and ultimately impenetrable human creature who shares every classroom with him".¹⁰ He criticizes the veneration of the scientific method present in today's approach to teaching as well as linguistic analysis and bemoans the lack of the sense of mystery:

... the germinal ideas behind all this rah-rahing for science and induction are valid enough, taken with a grain of sceptical salt, but that is just the trouble. In most of the infatuated literature on the subject the sceptical element is missing [...] The world is all for formula now and to hell with mystery.¹¹

The distinctions made by Marcel between "having" and "being", primary and secondary reflection, do have implications for instructional methods. Does the insistence on the scientific method or the problematic approach militate against the development of intuition, of creativity? Are we imposing a particular mode of thinking upon children which neglects the concern with such non-scientific topics as mystery, being, love or the question of values beyond the material realm - topics of great concern to existential man? Sonderquist has acknowledged the great danger in this approach:

¹⁰ John Stevens, "My Occupation - A Mystery?", in Teacher Education, Spring 1969, p. 17.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 23.

... But its blessings acknowledged, may it not be that so potent an instrument as analytical science in the hands of those who do not have an adequate philosophy may also have begun to produce negative consequences? There is, at least, the theoretical possibility that the teacher could become so thoroughly imbued with the analytical spirit that his pupils would assume, in his mind, the form of objects for scientific probing and manipulation, rather than real personalities demanding direct personal interest and regard. Again, theoretically, there is the possibility that the reflexive effect on the teacher himself might be loss of faith in the reality of his own freedom.¹²

This lack of reflection on the part of certain educators is the basis of the criticism of curricular change made by Marcel. He challenges the vanity of "specialists" who set themselves up as experts in educational matters and condemns the rashness of administrators who refuse to reflect on the effect of some of their educational demands on others and who couch their lack of reflection behind the veils of the intangibility and the immeasurability of educational outcomes.¹³ The concept of change for the sake of change is challenged by Marcel as being as destructive to creativity as inflexibility. Any change demands that the innovator have a particular goal in mind which must be of significant import to warrant the change. The need of

¹² Harold O. Sonderquist, The Person and Education, Columbus, Charles E. Merrill, 1964, p. 188.

¹³ Gabriel Marcel, Mystery of Being, Vol. I, Chicago, Regnery, 1951, p. 46-47.

reflection on the part of teachers and administrators in effecting change must be emphasized. Marcel feels that much of the material offered in schools has no existential meaning for students and that the positive result of the effort demanded of children in such matters will be precisely nothing. He challenges us to reflect on the total educational process to determine the value for the person of everything offered to him. The school is not a laboratory in which one can introduce "experiments" with the hope that something may be found. All innovations must be directed toward the final purpose of education since a person may be maimed psychologically or spiritually through irresponsible manipulation.¹⁴

"To be in vogue" is a cliché in vogue at the present time in educational circles. This expression can be equated to the colloquial expression of "jumping on the band-wagon". The constant emphasis on change can lead to the extreme. As a professional educator the teacher must be constantly up-to-date, but not in the sense that this means the discarding of certain approaches and theories which, although traditional, have been shown to be sound. Such things cannot be discarded in the same fashion as a candy wrapper. Values cannot be sacrificed to efficiency or expediency. Neither must one be inflexible to change but rather open to all suggestions

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

which will be viewed in the light of our philosophy of education.

Marcel's attitude towards the impersonal system of education to which he was exposed is quite negative. He has condemned the outlook towards education which regards the learner as a vessel capable of containing truths as well as certain inadequate ways of conceiving the teacher's function as one who "stuffs" the mind with insignificant material. The portrayal of the teacher as a "Mr. Gradgrind" is the epitome of impersonality. Marcel favors a method which permits creativity and self-expression on the part of the child and objects to the image of truth as a substance poured into the mind.¹⁵ He is not against content but would insist on an approach which would enable the pupil to see meaning in what is taught and which would permit him an opportunity of expressing himself and his understanding of the material in his own words. The content, in this instance, could not be reduced to some particular, exact formula:

... It is this irreducibility that we must keep a grip on if we want to get beyond the illusory image of truth as a physical object, a substance, the contents of a vessel, a mere thing, and to recognize the impossibility of adequately representing by material images those processes by which I can both conceive a true proposition and affirm it to be true.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

It is through the use of secondary reflection that we remain open to experience, that is, aware and sensitive to all the situations in which we find ourselves. It restores unity to experience by placing the person in the particular situation with all his peculiar characteristics.

The use of the scientific method has benefited scientific and technological progress but in education, its excessive emphasis on the verifiable has deprecated the approach to the "mysteries" of life which are indispensable to man's search for meaning. The teacher, through his awareness, can inhibit the egress of scientism by giving to the humanities the place which they deserve in contributing to meaningful integration of knowledge for the development of persons and by recognizing the function of creativity.

The creative activity of the individual demands a particular approach to others since they can either promote or restrict such activity. What is the role of others in the drive for self-fulfillment? The following chapter will consider this question.

CHAPTER XVI

IDENTIFICATION

Man is a social being. He is not a being-in-isolation but is dependent on others for his fulfillment. His need for others however, can be approached in various ways, ranging from individualism to oblation love.

1. The Perceptual Approach

The four authors of the Yearbook use the term "identification" to express the feeling of oneness with other human beings together with "... a strong desire to be useful, to contribute, to be responsible and serve humankind..."¹ This feeling of oneness supposedly produces a high degree of responsible, trustworthy behaviour in an individual. The authors reject the pessimistic view of the nature of man and posit a highly optimistic one which results in the denial of evil within individuals regarding them as basically cooperative, constructive, forward-looking, trustworthy and responsible. Combs looks upon this feeling of unity as "a feeling of sharing a common fate, or of striving for a common goal.

¹ Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Year book 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 165.

It represents a real extension of the self to include one's fellows".²

Identification is learned as a result of a positive view of self and of successful, satisfying experiences in interaction with other people.³ The motivation for identification, therefore is not internal but caused by the influence of the environment on the individual.

... As people are friendly and helpful, it is easy and natural to extend one's self to include them or to feel at one with them. As people are harmful and rejecting, on the other hand one's need to protect himself produces an organization from which such people must be excluded...⁴

This identification, therefore, seems to be one of convenience rather than love. But Kelley looks upon the fully-functioning person as a loving person who "... comes to see other people as opportunities, not for exploitation, but for the ^bbuilding of self..."⁵ Looking upon others as opportunities is to relegate them to the realm of objects and this is the same thing as exploiting them, not loving them.

2 Arthur W. Combs, "A Perceptual View of the Adequate Personality", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 54.

3 Ibid., p. 55-56.

4 Ibid., p. 55.

5 Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 18.

Since identification is learned, the school has an obligation in fostering the acquisition of this learning. To do this, the yearbook committee recommends that the child be surrounded by people whom he can regard as facilitating and with whom he can experience satisfying relationships. The school must become a model of cooperation rather than competition since "... identification is learned from experiences which bring people together rather than set them apart..."⁶ Competition is a divisive element in human relationships in relation to the posture under which it is assumed. Competition undertaken in a friendly atmosphere can lead to a cooperative effort, but competition as it exists in professional athletic teams may lead to a feeling which is disruptive to human relationships. Cooperation on the other hand is a positive approach to the relationships that should exist among individuals, it involves an active, dynamic, constructive type of behaviour which contributes to the good of all.⁷

The feeling of identification can also be destroyed by segregation of any type in the classroom whether it be on the basis of race, religion, sex intellectual ability or socioeconomic status. Opportunities for interaction in an

6 Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 166.

7 Ibid., p. 168-169.

atmosphere where difference is valued rather than feared are more conducive to fostering the spirit of identification than are the alienation factors involved in segregation. Homogeneous grouping or ability grouping "... tends to sanction mass teaching and the competitive marking system and prevents teachers from learning more about individualized instruction and self-evaluation..."⁸ The imposition of competition, segregation and the encouragement of passive behaviour by reward are practices which work against the development of a feeling of identification.

2. Marcel's Approach

The proposals made by the perceptual psychologists have merit and a consideration of the philosophy of Marcel will add a dimension to these proposals which will integrate and give direction to them. The unity or oneness which I feel with others, according to Marcel, is not the result of experiencing a common fate which demands cooperation but is a result of reflection on the human condition which recognizes the need of transcendence and participation!⁹ My posture in regard to others is not that of perceiving them

⁸ Ibid., p. 170-171.

⁹ Gabriel Marcel, The Existential Background of Human Dignity, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 34.

as objects or as echoing amplifiers of myself but rather of the dyadic relationship of love or intersubjectivity. The defence mechanisms which I use to protect myself from other people are inhibiting factors in the development of self-fulfillment. Since I discover myself through others, there is an essential need to be "open" to them, to establish intimate relations at the level of the "we", to love them. Impersonal treatment of persons eliminates communion with them and amounts to a rejection of that which gives them significance, worth and dignity.

The frailty, uneasiness and helplessness of the human being is the basis for the positing of something which transcends man and this Transcendence, this being, is the basis of hope for everyone.¹⁰ The optimism engendered by this hope is not the optimism of Kelley¹¹ which is based on the fact that tomorrow will be different from today and there is a chance of improvement, but it is a dynamic assurance which is founded in the motto "I hope in Thee for us". In this formula one can find the importance of the Transcendent, the importance of the person and the importance of Marcel's social concerns. The "us" indicates the unity or the oneness

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter IV infra.

¹¹ Earl C. Kelley, "The Fully Functioning Self", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Op. Cit., p. 19.

established in the Absolute Thou. The I-thou relationship demands a participation at the level of love, not solely cooperation at the level of co-existence - not merely "working together" (cooperation) but "being together" (Coesse).¹²

In educational practice, Marcel would promote only those approaches which would bring persons closer to each other in true personal relationships and he has condemned the "spirit of competition" to which young people are subjected in the academic world. This spirit is especially seen in examinations for particular positions and encourages individualism, alienating one person from another.

... Il y a tout lieu de penser en particulier que le régime de compétition perpétuelle auquel est soumis l'individu dans le monde contemporain ne peut qu'accroître, qu'exaspérer la conscience du moi. Je n'hésiterai pas à dire que si l'on veut lutter effectivement contre l'individualisme dans ce qu'il a de plus déformant, il faudra trouver moyen de rompre avec le système asphyxiant d'examens et de concours dans lequel se débat notre jeunesse. "Moi, pas toi: moi avant toi": on ne dira jamais assez à quel point ce régime de compétition a contribué à affaiblir, à anémier le sens authentiquement communautaire qui se manifeste au contraire au sein d'une équipe digne de ce nom. Ce régime incite en effet chacun à se comparer à l'autre, à se donner une note ou une cote par rapport à l'autre. Ne manquons pas de remarquer, ce qui est essentiel pour notre propos, qu'un tel régime, qui exacerbe la conscience du moi, ou si l'on veut l'amour-propre, est en même temps le plus dépersonnalisant qui soit; car ce qui vaut réellement en nous, c'est ce qui n'est pas justiciable de la comparaison, ce qui n'a pas de commune mesure avec autre chose. Mais malheureusement, sur ce point, il semble qu'on ait pris plaisir à accumuler toutes les confusions, et il ne faut pas hésiter à dire que les responsabilités de ceux qui ont prétendu célébrer le culte du moi sont ici écrasantes.¹³

¹² Chapter IX *infra* deals with this concept.

¹³ Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance*, Paris, Aubier, 1945, p. 22.

The role of the teacher is paramount in the development of persons. It is only through the realization of his frailties and weaknesses that he can help others and understand the weaknesses of others and the need of direction. It is in loving that others will be led to love. He should stand as the exemplar of personal relationships displaying love and dynamic hope. He must be a witness for those mysteries which surround us.

Marcel's concept of the development of the person is not the molding of a passive subject by an active environment, neither is it one of the active utilization of a passive environment by an individual striving for self-enhancement. He would rather conceive it as a process of interaction whereby the person and his environment act and react upon each other. The person who emerges from this process is neither the product of the environment alone nor of the "insular ego" but is a unique entity resulting from this interaction, both of them having been transformed in the process. An analogy might be made to the formation of water where hydrogen and oxygen combine to form a new substance. The analogy breaks down, however, when we try to analyse the various components since the person is more than the sum total of what is measurable. We can affirm the principle of Gestalt Psychology which states that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts".

Development, education, is a continuous process of interactivity wherein both the individual and others have responsibilities. Influences brought to bear externally will have their effect but the nature of the effect will depend upon the unique and individual responses of the person. The decisions which the individual makes will have an effect but the nature of the effect will depend upon the environment (including other persons) in which the decisions are to be implemented. The teacher in the classroom will give due recognition to the freedom, spontaneity and creativity of the individual but will also take account of the positive guidance and control necessary to the "person becoming", particularly in the early stages of development. There is no automatic imposition of adult standards upon the child, yet the relevance of the adult world to the personal and social needs of the developing person is taken into account. This concept demands a programme in which the educand is an active participant rather than a mere observer or recipient. This type of programme is in accord with Marcel's description of the person as a participant rather than a spectator of life and emphasizes the importance of participation - esse est co-esse. The individual should be given an opportunity to enter into relationships with other persons and things in a variety of appropriate experiences, by interaction with which his own development is advanced.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken in an attempt to expose and synthesize the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel in the light of possible educational contributions. His concepts have been given little recognition in educational commentaries on existentialism and education and it was felt that his philosophy needed to be expressed in an educational context to counteract the tendency on the part of educational commentators to confuse the philosophy of existentialism with the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. It was proposed that Marcel's philosophy integrated the rights of the individual and the rights of others and that his philosophy could bring depth and a philosophical base to the proposals made by certain perceptual psychologists whose views are representative of the contemporary emphasis on the individual and his self-fulfillment.

It was necessary to divide the study into three integrated parts in order to show the difficulty in attempting to formulate Marcel's philosophy, to expose his thoughts on themes which would delineate the unity that may be found therein and, to compare his philosophical emphasis with contemporary educational emphasis.

The first difficulty in exposition came from the fact that he has not written in a systematic fashion and he avoided

the fabrication of a "system". He was against every type of "ism", even Marcelism. His philosophy is a result of his sensitivity to lived experience and his gift of insight into that experience. The avenues of expression which were open to him in the communication of his thought compounded the attempt at exposition. Because of these "unconventional" modes of communication of philosophical ideas, (diary entries, drama, music) he has been regarded as a controversial figure in philosophical circles, praised in some quarters, denounced in others. His qualifications as a philosopher have even been challenged. Marcel, however, did present an integrated philosophy and it was proposed that this integration could be shown by focusing on the person and his relation to others together with the exigence of transcendence. Part One of this study attempted to give the background for the considerations mentioned above.

In accordance with the thematic approach chosen, an attempt was made in Part Two to examine in depth the concepts of transcendence, the person and interpersonal relations.

The need of transcendence was presented as being generated by the uncertainty and instability of the human condition and by the helplessness which man experiences in face of it. This need for fulfillment, the need to be rescued from the anxiety resulting from the awareness of his own finiteness and the limitations of his condition is the basis for

the positing of a transcendence which is also the center of man's hope. Hope, in this context becomes something dynamic and active implying communion rather than egocentrism. It is considered as the foundation ^rson_Ae of Marcel's philosophy.

The person was positioned in opposition to the impersonal "one", the "mass-man". He engages himself in life, confronts, evaluates, commits himself and assumes responsibility for his acts. He is a wayfarer, in the process of becoming, journeying from existence to Being. His dignity resides in the fact that he has been created in the image of God and his development can only take place in the recognition of a fraternity based on the dignity of all human beings and through the attainment of self-transcendence by breaking asunder the bonds of the "ego" which prevent him from reaching the level of being. This demands of the person a disponibilité, an openness to others. This openness in no way hinders the exercise of true freedom but is a perfection of it. Freedom is creative and liberative when it is used in the disponibilité of one person to another. Autonomy and self-sufficiency are transcended in the freedom of participation animated by love. The road to fulfillment and to Being demands a struggle on the part of the person-becoming. Man is torn between certain polarities which call for a decision and a commitment - a decision between the realm of being and the realm of having; the realm of mystery and the realm of

problem; the realm of secondary reflection and the realm of primary reflection. The danger of the degradation of the person is presented by certain techniques employed to seduce and exploit him. These tend to so indoctrinate the mind that man becomes alienated from himself and from values which are creative of his person. But he has resources at his disposal to counteract these influences. He can constantly be aware of them through the use of secondary reflection and can oppose them in the line of work in which he finds himself by struggling for the rights and dignity of every person against everything that attempts to crush or deny these rights and dignity. Moreover, he can find strength and encouragement by allying himself with small groups in which all the members are animated by the spirit of love and are working towards the same goal. It was the purpose of section one to elaborate the constitutive elements of the person found in Marcel's major works.

The person's relationship to others was investigated in section two of this Part. Marcel's social philosophy was expressed as being based on a metaphysics of we are i.e., by the formula esse est co-esse, contained in the concept of intersubjectivity which is a mode of participation in Being. It involves an encounter at the level of I-thou rather than a subject-object relationship. It is only in encounters in which there is an awareness of the sacredness of the other

and the establishment of a personal bond that I become known to myself. Paradoxically, in making myself vulnerable to another thou, I, myself, become strengthened. Intersubjectivity is the path which homo viator must follow on his journey from existence to Being. Intersubjectivity is love and love leads to communion with fellow-travellers. Certain signposts of man's orientation to life, the concrete approaches to Being, illumine his way to self-fulfillment. These concrete approaches, love, fidelity, hope, presence, and faith are the existentialia of Marcel. They are all interrelated and form a unity in love. All the strivings of man toward self-fulfillment find their realization in communion with the Absolute Other, the Absolute Thou who is invoked in Faith. Man's faith leads him to believe that as a traveller on earth he is called upon to establish a community of hope and love which will find fulfillment in the Absolute Thou.

After the presentation and critical evaluation of Marcel's philosophy which was centered around the themes chosen, an attempt was made in Part Three to compare Marcel's views with those of certain authors representing the contemporary emphasis in education on the individual in his striving for self-fulfillment. This comparison was made in regard to the themes of self-fulfillment; dignity, integrity, autonomy; conformity and creativity; identification. A similarity of approach was evident in that both parties were writing

from an existential viewpoint and both stressed the importance of the individual in the educative process. However, the emphasis on the "self" and on the freedom of the individual made by the Perceptual psychologists were not sufficiently explained in relation to others. In some instances they reached the point of irreconcilability with the freedom of others. Moreover, their proposals lacked a sound philosophical basis.

From this study the following conclusions can be made:

There is no dichotomy between the person and others in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. He presents a view of man in which self-fulfillment is approached in love-relationships between persons and these relationships involve self-transcendence.

The concept of freedom elaborated by Marcel admits of a social doctrine in which the rights of the person and others are reconciled.

Marcel's philosophy can present a philosophical base for the contemporary emphasis in education, especially for the proposals of the Perceptual psychologists by adding depth to their concepts of self-fulfillment, dignity, integrity, autonomy, conformity and creativity and identification.

Using this study as a point of departure, investigations could be made into the educational practices conducive

to the implementation of Marcel's concepts and, in particular into the implications of these concepts for teacher education. Moreover, research would be greatly facilitated by a compendium in English of Marcel's works and thoughts, similar to that produced in French by Roger Troisfontaines.

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This is the first collection of essays and lectures to be published. It is considered by Marcel to be the best introduction to his thought. It outlines his concrete philosophy, indicates the constitutive elements of the person, distinguishes between opinion and faith, elaborates the themes of fidelity, participation, incarnate being and provides a meditation on the idea of proof of God's existence.

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Kelley, Earl C., "The Fully Functioning Self", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 9-20.

The authentic person thinks well of himself and others, he develops and holds human values and lives by them. His hope is based on an expected change and his relationship to others is based on a cooperative life.

Kennedy, D. A., "Self-Direction: What Direction?", in Educational Leadership, Vol. 24, issue of October 1966, p. 10-12.

The emphasis on the individual's tendency to move toward self-fulfillment is challenged by the author. He feels that environmental conditions are more important than any presumed inherent tendency. This article is a reply to the proposals of Arthur W. Combs.

Kingston, Temple F., French Existentialism, A Christian Critique, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1961, xv-221 p.

A comparison of the writings of Christian existentialists in relation to the chief topics of existentialism. Marcel's philosophy is stressed throughout the book.

Luther, Arthur, "Marcel's Metaphysics of the We Are", in Philosophy Today, Vol. 10, No. 3/4, issue of Fall 1966, p. 191-203.

An outline of the direction of Marcel's metaphysics. The author is of the opinion that both subjective depth and the universal validity of man's experience can be retained.

Maslow, Abraham H., "Some Basic Propositions of a Growth and Self-Actualization Psychology", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 34-49.

An attempt to delineate a view of human nature with its capabilities, possibilities and goals. The propositions presented refer to growth toward self-actualization and the attributes which characterize the self-actualized person are presented. Maslow's outlook is existential.

Miceli, Vincent P., Ascent to Being, Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion, New York, Desclée, 1965, xviii-218 p.

The key to the unity of Marcel's thought appears, to the author, to be the principle in all being of the need for transcendence. The fulfillment of this need is indicated as a progressive journey through the stages of communication, communion and community. An excellent treatment of Marcel's philosophy.

Mihalich, Joseph C., Existentialism and Thomism, New York, Philosophical Library, 1960, 91 p.

The second essay in this series is devoted to Marcel's ontology of love. The author regards Marcel as the only figure in the modern era to reconcile organized religion and existentialist philosophy. He labels Marcel's approach to philosophy as a mystique rather than a metaphysics.

Montagu, Ashley, "Quest for Self", in Childhood Education, Vol. 41, No. 1, issue of Sept. 1964, p. 3-8.

The implications for the teacher of the quest for self are presented.

Moustakas, Clark E., Creativity and Conformity, Toronto, D. Van Nostrand, 1967, xiii-142 p.

A stand is taken in this book in behalf of individuality and creativity. Chapter three deals with the consequences of widespread conformity in modern life, particularly in reference to the emergence of creativity. The concept of freedom is, perhaps, over-extended.

Murchland, Bernard G., "Gabriel Marcel - A Spiritual Realist", in Catholic World, Vol. 185, No. 1109, issue of August 1957, p. 340-345.

The necessity of integrating the objective truth of Revelation into the life of the believer is the emphasis of this descriptive article on Marcel's orientation.

Ostermann, Robert, "An Introduction to Gabriel Marcel", in Catholic World, Vol. 177, issue of June 1953, p. 187-193.

Written in a very literary style and oppressed by clichés, the article describes Marcel's philosophical approach.

-----, "Reason, Faith and Gabriel Marcel", in The Irish Theological Quarterly, Vol. 20, issue of April 1953, p. 192-196.

Marcel is criticized in this article for the use of careless language in opposition to the precision of Scholastic philosophy. The author accuses Marcel of viewing his philosophy through an Idealistic glass and of philosophical writing inspired by theological teaching, not by any natural philosophical experience.

Parain-Vial, Jeanne, Gabriel Marcel et les niveaux de l'expérience, (no place), Editions Seghers, 1966, 191 p.

A treatment of Marcel's philosophical method, described as an ascending dialectic, with a description of the various levels of being from perception to love through participation. The book is completed by an anthology of selections from the works of Marcel. It serves as a good introduction to Marcel's thought.

Ricoeur, Paul, Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, Philosophie du Mystère et Philosophie du Paradoxe, Paris, Editions du Temps Présent, 1947, 455 p.

A comparative study of the two philosophers on the themes of the human condition and transcendence. A good synthesis of the thought of both philosophers.

Rogers, Carl R., "Toward Becoming a Fully Functioning Person", in Arthur W. Combs, Ed., Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming, A New Focus for Education, Yearbook 1962, prepared by A.S.C.D. 1962 Yearbook Committee, Washington, N.E.A., 1962, p. 21-33.

From the background of client-centered therapy, the author describes three trends in becoming a fully functioning person - openness to experience, living as a process and the trust of one's organism. The process involves integration, creativity and the trustworthiness of human nature.

Stevens, John, "My Occupation - A Mystery?", in Teacher Education, (no vol.), issue of Spring 1969, p. 16-24.

The concept of mystery is delineated in opposition to the scientific concept of teaching. The author feels that we are losing the sense of mystery by concentration on observable and verifiable approaches.

Tilliette, Xavier, "Gabriel Marcel ou le Socratisme Chrétien", in Xavier Tilliette, Philosophes Contemporains: Gabriel Marcel, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Karl Jaspers, Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1962, p. 9-47.

This concise, well-documented commentary on Marcel's philosophy is the most informative and penetrating treatment that this writer has found.

Troisfontaines, Roger, De l'existence à l'être: la philosophie de Gabriel, Lettre-préface de Gabriel Marcel, 2 Vols., Louvain, Nauwelaerts, 1953, Vol. I, 415 p., Vol. II, 431 p.

This work is a summa of Marcel's philosophy. The author has merited the praise of Marcel for the systematic manner in which he treated his philosophy. He regards man's life as a journey from existence to being, from existential community to ontological communion. A complete bibliography of Marcel's works up to 1953 is appended to Volume two. In the second edition, published in 1968, the bibliography is up-dated to 1966. An excellent manual for research purposes.

Van Ewijk, Thomas J. M., Gabriel Marcel, An Introduction, Matthew J. Van Velzen, translator, Glen Rock, N.J., Paulist Press, 1965, 89 p.

A short introduction designed to acquaint the casual reader with certain themes in Marcel's philosophy.

Zuidema, S. V., "Gabriel Marcel: A Critique", in Philosophy Today, Vol. 4, No. 4/4, issue of Winter 1960, p. 283-288.

A very negative criticism of Marcel's approach. The writer feels that his ontology of Being is essentially an anti-humanistic theology in a pseudo-humanistic dress. The source of the passages which he criticizes is not indicated.

Entretiens, Paul Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel, Paris, Aubier-Montaigne, 1968, 131 p.

A series of six interviews in which Paul Ricoeur directly questions Marcel on his total philosophical quest with the intention of providing a critical look at his work. Marcel's attitude on certain themes is clarified by these frank, short, discussions.

ABSTRACT OF

The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel and Contemporary Emphasis in Education¹

This study had a two-fold purpose, namely, to show the unity of Marcel's philosophy through the development of the concepts of transcendence, the person, the "other" and to compare such emphasis on the person with contemporary emphasis in education on the individual in his quest for self-fulfillment.

Using the major philosophical works of Gabriel Marcel and supplementing these with his dramatic works, the study proceeded, in three parts, to make the considerations outlined above. A background to Marcel's life and works together with an introduction to his chief concerns were presented in Part One. The difficulty in exposition became evident from the treatment of Marcel as a controversial philosopher and from the fact that he did not write in a systematic fashion. An attempt at synthesis and unity was made in Part Two through an investigation of the exigence of transcendence, the constitutive elements of the person and interpersonal relationships. These were the concepts with which Marcel was concerned in his writings. An evaluation of Marcel's

¹ Claude D. MacNeil, doctoral thesis presented to the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa, Canada, 1969, xiv-251 p.

philosophy through internal criticism completed this Part. In attempting to relate Marcel's philosophy to education, the contemporary emphasis on the individual and his search for self-fulfillment provided an avenue of comparison. For this reason the approach of the Perceptualist psychologists to education was taken as a base of reference in Part Three.

As a result of the investigations it was concluded that there is no dichotomy between the individual and others in the philosophy of Marcel and that the rights of the individual and others formed a unity in his thought. The freedom of the individual is always in reference to others since self-fulfillment can only be achieved through self-transcendence. It was further concluded that Marcel's philosophy could serve as a philosophic base for contemporary emphasis in education and would bring depth to that emphasis.