

**ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**ABSOLUTE THOU AS THE GROUND OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF GABRIEL MARCEL**

**A Thesis Presented to**

**The Faculty of Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Science in Theology**

**BY**

**BLESSILDO G. DAGASEN**

**TAYTAY, RIZAL**

**MARCH 2013**



ASIA-PACIFIC NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WE HEREBY APPROVE THE THESIS

SUBMITTED BY

BLESSILDO G. DAGASEN

ENTITLED


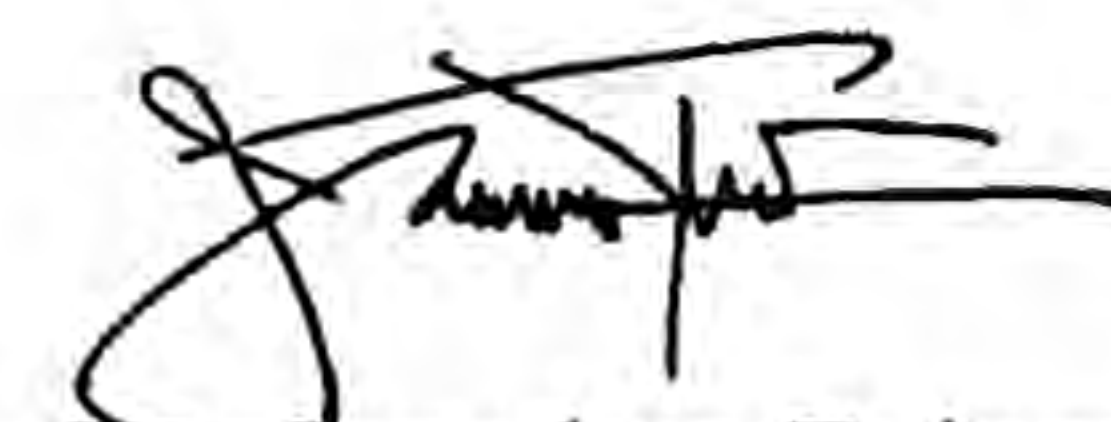
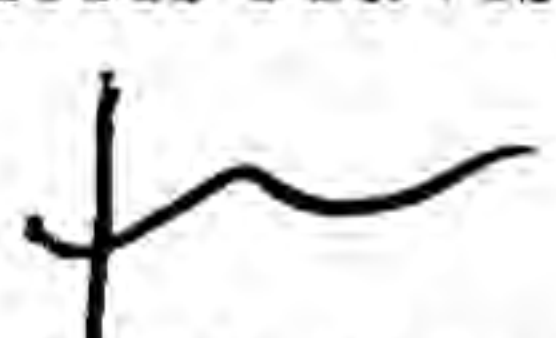
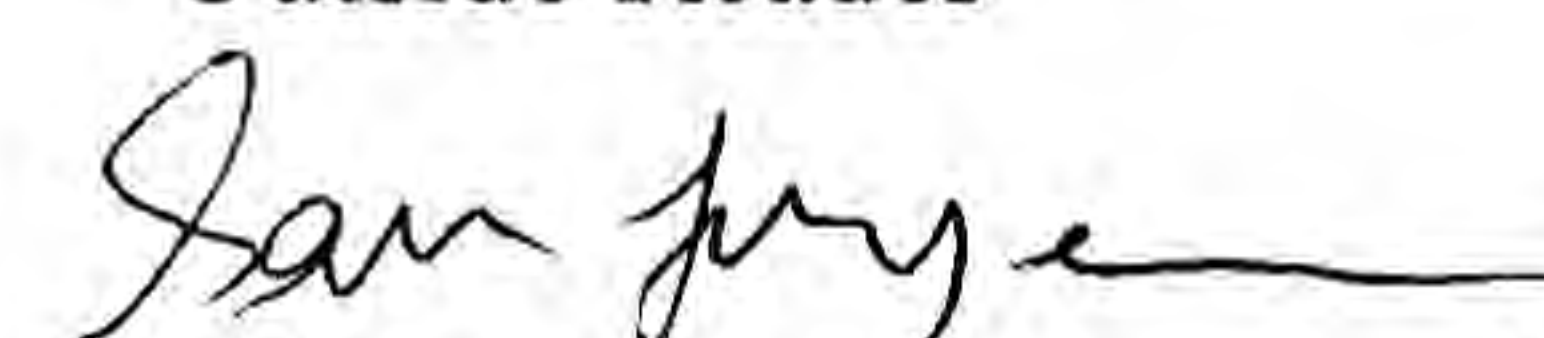

ABSOLUTE THOU AS THE GROUND OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF GABRIEL MARCEL

AS PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN THEOLOGY

|  |                              |   |                              |
|--|------------------------------|---|------------------------------|
| <br><u>Prof. Larnie Sam Tabuena</u><br>Thesis Advisor             | <u>25 March 2013</u><br>Date | <br><u>Dr. Jonathan Exiomo</u><br>Outside Reader | <u>18 March 2013</u><br>Date |
| <br><u>Dr. Dick Eugenio</u><br>Faculty Reader                   | <u>25 March 2013</u><br>Date | <br><u>Dr. San Young Lee</u><br>Academic Dean    | <u>25 March 2013</u><br>Date |
| <br><u>Dr. Floyd T. Cunningham</u><br>President/Faculty Reader | <u>25 March 2013</u><br>Date |   |                              |



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hereby convey my heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to those who have contributed to the realization of this thesis.

I give glory to God for His providence and abiding presence throughout the course of this academic requirement. I owe deep gratitude to Prof., Rev. Larnie Sam Tabuena, my adviser, for his professional advice, profound thoughts, and motivation; to Dr./Uncle Robert Bickert and Aunt Kay Bickert for their invaluable support, encouragement, and prayers; to Dr. Gervasis Karumathy for his indispensable help, your humble spirit always inspires me; to Dr. Dennis F. Kinlaw for being a resource person and consultant, with his profound insights, motivation, and affirmation of the relevance of this study; to Dr. and Mrs. Robert Donahue for their precious advice and encouragement; to Prof. Linda Bondy for graciously editing this paper despite her hectic schedules; to my *Koinonia* group for their prayers and moral support; to my father, Rev. Samuel Dagasen and my mother, Lolita Dagasen, for their patience, love and sacrifices, travelling many times between Baguio City and Rizal to babysit Shaun; to my siblings for their supports; to my dearest wife Dia and son Shaun for their love and the joy that they bring into my life. To all of these and many others who have given their encouragement, I would express my humble thanks.



*To father and mother  
Rev. Samuel L. Dagsen and Mrs. Lolita Dagsen*

*and*

*To my beloved wife Dia and son Shaun,  
God precious gifts*



## ABSTRACT

The arguments of Gabriel Marcel on God, the Absolute Thou as the ground of intersubjectivity is presented. The researcher used both expository and correlation methods to establish the nature and significance of the reciprocal relationship between intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou. Marcel's existential ontology highlights his "mysterious" approach to reality that reveals human persons with *exigence of being* and as essentially participating *beings-in-the-world*.

At the core of Marcel's intersubjectivity are these inseparable pillars: love, fidelity, and hope that characterize openness, community, unconditionality, and eternity. Central to these pillars is a theocentric directedness. In Marcel's non-objective approach to God, the Absolute Thou breaks free from the presentation of God as an abstract entity. Rather, the Absolute Thou manifests as open presence, abiding presence, and eternal presence. Because the Absolute Thou is relational, therefore God can be experienced through personal involvement by the way of faith, love, and hope.

The result of the study justified the centrality of God, the Absolute Thou in intersubjectivity in two levels: (1) only God can fulfill a human persons' *exigence of being*, and (2) only in God, the Absolute Thou can love, fidelity, and hope have their full assurance and eternal significance.

This study includes two areas of recommendations: the first focuses on an exploration of the centrality of love in Marcel's philosophy and the second focuses on a comparative study between Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity and Wesley's theology. Wesleyan theology deals dealing with: (1) personhood; (2) intersubjectivity and Perfect



Love, i.e., entire sanctification; (3) the “I-he/she/it relationship” and the understanding of sin; (4) the triune Godhead as a framework for the notion of intersubjectivity as agapeic love; and (5) the *exigence of being* and imago *Dei*.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| APPROVAL SHEET   |     |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS   | iii |
| DEDICATION   | iv  |
| ABSTRACT   | v   |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS  | vi  |
|  |     |
| CHAPTER 1  |     |
| THE PROBLEM  | 1   |
| Background of the Study  | 1   |
| Statement of the Problem   | 13  |
| Conceptual Framework   | 14  |
| Significance of the Study  | 15  |
| Definition of Terms  | 16  |
| Scope and Limitation of the Study  | 19  |
|  |     |
| CHAPTER 2  |     |
| REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND STUDIES   | 21  |
| Gabriel Marcel's Biographical Sketch   | 21  |
| Marcel's Own Writings  | 25  |
| Literature Related to the Relevance of<br>Marcel's Philosophy in the Present Time                      | 30  |
| Literature Related to Marcel's Existential Ontology  | 31  |
| Literature and Studies on Marcel's Notion of<br>Intersubjectivity                                      | 34  |
| Literature and Studies on Marcel's Notion of<br>the Absolute Thou                                      | 38  |
| Conclusion   | 41  |
|  |     |
| CHAPTER 3  |     |
| RESEARCH DESIGN  | 43  |
| Methodology  | 43  |
| Sources of Data  | 44  |
| Research-Gathering Procedure   | 45  |
| Treatment of Data  | 46  |
| Feasibility of Study   | 47  |
|  |     |
| CHAPTER 4  |     |
| MARCEL'S EXISTENTIAL ONTOLOGY: A PROLEGOMENON TO<br>THE NOTIONS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND ABSOLUTE THOU | 48  |
| Philosophy as Participation  | 48  |
| Broken world   | 52  |
| <i>Exigence of being</i>   | 54  |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Problem and Primary Reflection and Having . . . . .  | 57  |
| Mystery and Secondary Reflection . . . . .   | 60  |
| Mystery Reveals the Realm of Being . . . . .   | 62  |
| <i>Disponibilité</i> and <i>Indisponibilité</i> as Open Possibilities . . . . .                          | 65  |
| Conclusion . . . . .   | 67  |
| <br>   |     |
| CHAPTER 5  |     |
| MARCEL'S NOTION OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY . . . . .   | 68  |
| Incarnation as Basic Intersubjectivity . . . . .   | 68  |
| Sensation as Participation . . . . .   | 71  |
| Love . . . . .   | 73  |
| Intersubjectivity as Mutual Openness . . . . .   | 74  |
| I-thou and I-he/she/it Contrasted . . . . .  | 75  |
| I-thou Relationship . . . . .  | 76  |
| Freedom and <i>Disponibilité</i> . . . . .   | 79  |
| One, But Not Losing Oneself . . . . .  | 80  |
| Fidelity . . . . .   | 83  |
| Fidelity as Preservation of Love . . . . .   | 83  |
| Fidelity Characterizes Unconditionality and Permanency . . . . .   | 84  |
| Fidelity as a Response to Person . . . . .   | 86  |
| Hope . . . . .   | 88  |
| Hope as Radical Openness . . . . .   | 88  |
| Hope as Communal . . . . .   | 91  |
| Hope Implies Eternity . . . . .  | 92  |
| Conclusion . . . . .   | 92  |
| <br>   |     |
| CHAPTER 6  |     |
| MARCEL'S NOTION OF ABSOLUTE THOU . . . . .   | 94  |
| God the Absolute Thou as Non-objective . . . . .   | 94  |
| God the Absolute Thou as Experiential and as Presence . . . . .  | 98  |
| <i>Exigence of being</i> and Intersubjectivity situate<br>the affirmation of the Absolute Thou . . . . . | 99  |
| Conversion as Precondition for the Sacral . . . . .  | 100 |
| Fidelity, Love, and Hope: Concrete Approaches<br>to the Absolute Thou . . . . .                          | 101 |
| Love: Absolute Thou as Open Presence . . . . .   | 101 |
| Fidelity: Absolute Thou as Abiding Presence . . . . .  | 104 |
| Hope: Absolute Thou as Eternal Presence . . . . .  | 108 |
| Conclusion . . . . .   | 110 |
| <br>   |     |
| CHAPTER 7  |     |
| CORRELATION: ABSOLUTE THOU<br>AS THE GROUND OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY . . . . .                               | 112 |



|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Absolute Thou Grounds Intersubjectivity<br>in the level of <i>Exigence of Being</i> . . . . . | 112 |
| Absolute Thou grounds Intersubjectivity<br>on the Level of Love, Fidelity, and Hope . . . . . | 119 |
| Agape as the Guiding Principle of Love . . . . .  | 119 |
| Faith as the Guiding Principle of Fidelity . . . . .  | 126 |
| God the Absolute Thou and Hope . . . . .  | 127 |
| Triadic Relationship of Love, Fidelity, and Hope . . . . .                                    | 128 |
| Conclusion . . . . .  | 130 |
| <br>  |     |
| CHAPTER 8   |     |
| SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .  | 132 |
| Summary . . . . .   | 132 |
| Conclusions . . . . .   | 133 |
| Recommendations . . . . .   | 136 |
| <br>  |     |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .  | 138 |
| <br>  |     |
| APPENDIX . . . . .  | 148 |



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Problem

The present time tends to increasingly show an intense polarity between science and religion. Richard Dawkins, Oxford zoologist and renowned atheist who continuously mocks religion, asserts in his book *The God Delusion*<sup>1</sup> that the notion of God is a virus in the mind that needs to be expunged. On the other hand, atheism is a freedom of the mind and a healthy mind. He also adds that religion is an irrational superstition while science is rational and based on evidence. In a more practical level, such an attitude tends to be penetrating deeper and deeper into the heart of society. Many people are now more dependent upon science and technology as the answer to problems they are facing. As columnist Trevor Thomas notes, “we get the motto of the technocrats: ‘only science can save us now.’ Whether it is global warming, stem-cell research, the beginning of life, health care, crime, homosexuality, gun control or economic policies, the technocrats have the answers.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Bantam Press, 2006), 5-6, 23-67, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas adds, “Scientism can also be classified as a religion. It is a religion with many denominations: Darwinism, environmentalism, feminism, hedonism, humanism, Marxism, socialism and so on. How many Americans now find their fulfillment and purpose in these movements? They celebrate Earth Day and Darwin Day. They boldly assert, “Science is my Savior.” Also, scientism arrogantly attempts to lift itself above all other beliefs and disciplines—philosophy and theology included. “Philosophy is dead,” declared Stephen Hawking in his 2010 book, *The Grand Design*. It is dead because, “Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics.” See Trevor Thomas, “Technocracy is the allure of scientism,” *Gainesvilletimes*. Available from: <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/archives/77853/>, accessed: 10 March 2013; also appears in *The American*



As humans thrive for more knowledge and exhaust their capacity to create, they enthrone themselves at the center of a completely human universe. Rapidly they progress in controlling the world and subsequently pronounce themselves as the source of power and freedom, and the definer of norms and values. As Malcolm Muggeridge once noted, “if God is dead, someone will take his place—either the power-monger or the hedonist.”<sup>3</sup> And in the same line of thought, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky remarks, “If there is no immortality [God] then all things are permitted.”<sup>4</sup> Thereby, as Thomas observes:

Generations are taught that life began without God; that the use of fossil fuels is warming the earth; that homosexuality is genetic; that abortion is not really the taking of a life; that confiscating the wealth of some to give to others is “fair;” that guns are evil; and so on. Of course, we then get laws and official government policy based on such conclusions.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, how much truer are these words of Victor Frankl who experienced the evil of the nihilism:

If we present man with a concept of man which is not true, we may as well corrupt him. When we present him as an automaton of reflexes, a mind machine, as a bundle of instincts, as a pawn of drive and reactions, as a mere product of heredity and environment, we feed the nihilism to which modern man is, in any case, prone. I became acquainted with the last stage of corruption in my second concentration camp, Auschwitz. The gas chambers of Auschwitz were the ultimate consequence of the theory that man is nothing but the product of heredity and environment—or, as the Nazis liked to say, “of blood and soil.” I am absolutely convinced that the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Treblinka, and

---

*Thinker* February 28, 2013. Available from: [http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/12/the\\_allure\\_and\\_danger\\_of\\_scientism.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/12/the_allure_and_danger_of_scientism.html), accessed: 11 March 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Dale Fincher, “Questions Asked: “How Do I Know God is Real?”” *Slice of Infinity* (June 2004). Available in: <http://www.rzim.org/resources/read/asliceofinfinity/todaysslice.aspx?aid=8467>, accessed: July 29, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> William Lane Craig, “The Absurdity of Life without God,” *Reasonable Faith*. Available in: <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5389>, accessed: July 29, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas, “Technocracy is the allure of scientism.”



Maidanek were ultimately prepared not in some ministry or other in Berlin, but rather at the desk and in lecture halls of nihilistic scientists and philosophers.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, through the assertion of freedom and power upon themselves, human persons are confident that all things are possible and that there are no limits towards their obsession of power and accumulation of material possession. An American academic historian, Howard Zinn, expresses, “. . . people are driven, driven to accumulate, accumulate without even asking the question of will this make me happy or not.”<sup>7</sup> Ironically, although human persons claim to be wise, they become fools and oblivious of their being human. Barbara Kruger’s famous slogan succinctly conveys this ill in human thinking when she writes, “I shop, therefore I am.” The more human persons advance to becoming totally self-sufficient and self-governing, the more they experience a sense of loss of the meaning of what it means to be human. John Francis, an environmentalist, states, “I found that a lot of people were unhappy even though they seem to have everything. Even though they seem to doing or believing that American dream.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, in defining themselves based on what they have or possess, human persons eventually reduced themselves into an object as “functional agents, welfare units,

---

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live without God* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994), 25.

<sup>7</sup> In Tom Shadyac, *I am: Documentary*. DVD. Directed by Tom Shadyac (Distributor City: Distributor, 2011). This documentary relates the transformation that took place in the life of Tom Shadyac, a fame movie director. The basic question that he sought to answer was: What is wrong with the world, and what can we do about it? His search for the answer brought him around the world. The director interweaves his life story with interviews of several famed scientist, thinkers, and thinkers like Lynne McTaggart, Thom Hartmann, Noam Chomsky, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, David Suzuki, Howard Zinn, and Shadyac’s father.

<sup>8</sup> Shadyac, *I am: Documentary*. DVD. Directed by Tom Shadyac (Distributor City: Distributor, 2011).



cannon fodder, party members, anything that is abstract and definable rather than human beings,”<sup>9</sup> as V. Langmead Casserley has remarked.

Not only have human persons become alienated or strangers to themselves, but they have also become isolated from others. Esther L. Baraceros, a Filipina columnist, graphically describes:

Totally absorbed by the sound of their iPod or Mp3s or engrossed in building connections with somebody somewhere through their cellphones, they become oblivious to their surroundings. They regard as essential only those projected in their technological gadgets; un-essential, are those not sensed by them via their computers or cellphones . . . Making these people seem isolated and holed up in their comfort zones with their digital gadgets intact. *Technology breeds citizens who tend to be complacent, individualistic, oblivious, or uncaring.*<sup>10</sup>

Despite current humanity’s problematic state of affairs, deep within each person’s heart exists an irrepressible dissatisfaction and emptiness, and an inward protest that they are not merely a network of things, functions and events. Tom Shadyac, a Hollywood blockbuster filmmaker alluded to earlier, relates his self-realization and subsequent transformation in his search for truth with these words: “ ‘what I discovered, when I began to look deeply, was that the world I was living in was a lie . . . Much to my surprise, the accumulation of material wealth was a neutral phenomenon, neither good or bad, and certainly did not buy happiness.’ ”<sup>11</sup>

Human persons perceived chiefly as a scientific and technological problem to be analyzed, can only lead to the alienation of human persons from themselves and isolation

---

<sup>9</sup> J.V. Langmead Casserley, “Gabriel Marcel,” in Carl Michalson, ed., *Christianity and the Existentialists* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1956), 90.

<sup>10</sup> Esther L. Baraceros, “State of Oblivion through Technology,” *Philippine Panorama*, 19 August 2012, 21. Italics added.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in “I am: A Film by Tom Shadyac,” 3. Available from: [http://iamthedoc.com/site/wp-content/press/I\\_AM\\_Presskit-FINAL.pdf](http://iamthedoc.com/site/wp-content/press/I_AM_Presskit-FINAL.pdf), accessed: 11 March 2013.



from others. The tendency of deifying science and technology only leads to despair and meaninglessness. Suffice it to say that the abolishment of the absolutes grants human persons the ability to be the definer of reality; and with science and technology as their tools, they have created a world that has lost the awareness of the ontological, that dimension which reveals human persons with intrinsic worth and value, not as mere entities. As alluded to above, these results can be readily observed in today's world: godlessness, self-centeredness, infidelity, manipulation, technological debauchery, hopelessness, and disfigurement of relationships.

Hence, the researcher considers that there seems to be a *relationship* between meaninglessness and abolition of the concept of God—a question that has provoked the researcher for years which has subsequently led him to research this relationships. The researcher perceives that humanity's emptiness could be identified and correlated with the demise of the Absolute Reality. That meaninglessness is in itself a clue to humanity's need for God.

However, the researcher's problem focused on how to investigate the intelligibility of the cause and effect relationship between the demise of God and the meaninglessness of existence. He was looking for a framework or guiding principle for such a polarity between Absolute Reality and science. Because of the researcher's questioning mind searching for answers to life's basic questions which began to develop early in High School and led him to major in philosophy at a university. The researcher's background in philosophical studies led him to revisit philosophers in the past who have reflected extensively on the meaning of existence.



Among the philosophers who protested on the alienation of the human person in the technological age were Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), Martin Buber (1878-1965), and Gabriel Marcel (1883-1973). They aimed to restore the ontological weight of human persons. They contended that the human person is not an object or function, but essentially a *being-with-others*.

Through *Dasein*, which literally means, “being there,” (which also means human beings or human existence) Martin Heidegger seeks to show that human beings are primordially being-with (*mitsein*) the world. Being-with is an essential element of *Dasein* which basically means for the sake of others.<sup>12</sup> Being-with is a prerequisite of one’s knowledge of oneself, essentially meaning that one with others in the world is fundamentally necessary in entering a relationship with others. Thus, one is essentially and inescapably with others. However, while Heidegger establishes the primordial social construct of human persons from the very start, he is confined on the level of the cognitive in pointing out that relations have been already constructed prior to the concrete. As Dan Zahavi observes, “Heidegger’s account in the particular also seems to suggest that the concrete encounter with another simply unfolds or articulates what was already there from the very start *a priori*, rather than adding anything new.”<sup>13</sup>

The rejection of the cognitive or a priori intersubjectivity paves the way to the search for transcendence and embodiedness of the other. In the early stage of *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre tends to be in agreement with Heidegger’s intrinsic

---

<sup>12</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 160.

<sup>13</sup> Dan Zahavi, “Beyond Empathy Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity,” *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8 (2001): 156. Available from: [http://cfs.ku.dk/staff/zahavi-publications/Zahavi\\_JCS\\_8\\_5-7.pdf/](http://cfs.ku.dk/staff/zahavi-publications/Zahavi_JCS_8_5-7.pdf/), date accessed: 9-8-11.



intersubjectivity of human persons. For Sartre, human persons' daily activities project intersubjectivity in their participatory act with other subjects in the society—"even in the absence of an encounter with concrete others."<sup>14</sup> Despite this agreement, however, Sartre's criticism of Heidegger points to the latter's failure to capture the human persons' "original and fundamental relations to others."<sup>15</sup> To Sartre, there is something more fundamental to the *being-with* of Heidegger and that is the *being-for-others*.<sup>16</sup> Heidegger's *being-with* of *Dasein* in the intrinsic and *a priori* sense lacks flesh and blood interaction with others. Sartre's conception of intersubjectivity is an emphasis on the concrete relations of embodied subjects. He proposes an understanding of the *being-for-others* in existential dimension where concrete encounter of the other is possible.

Sartre's road to the existence of the other and to intersubjectivity is elaborated in his analysis of shame. In the encounter with the presence of the other, one is perceived as the subject and the other as the object. One's shame is the outcome of being objectified through the gaze of the other. According to Sartre, shame preconditions the interference of the other. This interaction emerges as an awareness of another subjectivity. Thus, what comes out of the interaction paves the way to human relationships where the other's

---

<sup>14</sup> Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity," 157.

<sup>15</sup> Zahavi further elaborates that to Sartre, "any 'theory of intersubjectivity' which attempts to bridge the gap between the self and the other by emphasizing their similarity, undifferentiatedness, and a priori interconnectedness is not only in constant danger of relapsing into a monism that in the end would be indistinguishable from solipsism, it is also losing sight of the real issue: our concrete encounter with this or that transcendent other." See Zahavi, "Beyond Empathy Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity," 157-158.

<sup>16</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 465.



transcendence is emphasized. In the final analysis, Sartre takes conflict and confrontation as the essence of intersubjectivity.<sup>17</sup>

In their efforts to give a solution to the objectification and alienation of the human person, Heidegger's and Sartre's intersubjectivity tends to lead to alienation itself. Heidegger projected the human subject's relations essentially in solitudeness. He is trapped in *a priori* structure of relationship with its failure to breach the cognitive constitution to concrete embodiment. Martin Buber contends that in Heidegger:

Individual man appears only as a relation of solitude. A relation of mere solicitude cannot be essential; in an essential relation which includes solicitude the essentiality is derived from another realm which is lacking in Heidegger. An essential relation to individual men can only be a direct relation from life to life in which a man's reserve is resolved and the barriers of his self-being are breached.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, to Buber, Heidegger fails to break the barrier between the self and the other.

Moreover, Buber argues that Heidegger's philosophical secularism abandons the realm of religious conception of the bond between the self and the absolute, which, to Buber is "a bond in real mutual relation of person with person."<sup>19</sup>

While successful in showing the embodiment of the other, Sartre undermines genuine communion in taking conflict as the essence of intersubjectivity. In Sartre's philosophy, the Transcendent or God is totally excluded. In this way, human persons are the definers of themselves.<sup>20</sup> Sartre's view of being is self-defeating for it denies the intrinsic meaning and value in human persons—and in the final analysis, it professes

---

<sup>17</sup> Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, 292.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 178.

<sup>19</sup> Buber, *Between Man and Man*, 179.

<sup>20</sup> This is what Sartre exactly meant by saying that existence precedes essence. See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in Walter Kaufman, ed. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: The Word Publishing Company, 1956), 290-291.



nihilism.<sup>21</sup> To Sartre, one's free subjectivity is realized when one objectifies the other.<sup>22</sup> Human persons are the supreme law. Since their freedom is absolute, everyone creates one's own world, so that one's world and another's world have no relation at all. And from here it follows that human persons' being-with-others is reduced to nihilizing and negative character that points to an absurdity in the world.

Thus, in undermining the intersubjective intimacy, Sartre's eradicates the *We reality* which is constituted by the intimate relation of an I and a Thou. Accordingly, Sartre's philosophy denies that human beings have an essence and the possibility of true communion. His philosophy could be rightly labeled as a philosophy of alienation which to him is the essence of human condition.<sup>23</sup> Thus, from those two prominent philosophers, who attempted to philosophize on human reality, human beings are construed as alienated and solitary. In undermining the absolute, they could only find their *being-with-others* and *being-for-others* unstable because they have no proper grounding to hinge on their very being.

In Martin Buber's philosophy, human persons are made for relationships with other human beings, with the world, and with God.<sup>24</sup> According to Buber, there are two types of relationship that depict a two-fold attitude toward the world: the I-It and the I-

---

<sup>21</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 49-50.

<sup>22</sup> John D. Glenn, Jr., "Marcel and Sartre: The Philosophy of Communion and the Philosophy of Alienation," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 530.

<sup>23</sup> Glenn, "Marcel and Sartre," 544. In his reply to Glen's article "Marcel and Sartre: The Philosophy of Communion and the Philosophy of Alienation," Marcel affirms their separate paths as Sartre's himself traps in the Cartesian Cogito. He writes, "It can generally be said that Sartre's sources never coincide with mine. In the end he remains radically in the tradition of the Cartesian *cogito*." See "Reply to John D. Glenn, Jr." in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 552.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 101.



Thou relationship. The I-It relationship is a fragmentary outlook of the world where things are measured, analyzed, manipulated, dissected and disunited.<sup>25</sup> Mutual relationship never takes place. Thus, in I-It, one conceptualizes the other and treats that being as a thing or object, and thus isolates the other.<sup>26</sup> The I-Thou relationship is where an interpersonal communion happens where the “I” meets the Thou as a person and not as a thing or object. Community is fully realized when built with I-Thou related persons. To Buber, the I-Thou relationship is where God and human beings can interact. Thus, the human relationship is at the same time an engagement with God.<sup>27</sup> God as the eternal Thou is where all I-Thou relations intersect.<sup>28</sup> As Malcolm L. Diamond observes, Buber sees the eternal Thou as the foundation of “all encounters because of the total framework of meaning that is manifest when we ‘let go’ and enter into a relation.”<sup>29</sup>

Like Buber, Gabriel Marcel, a French Roman Catholic existentialist philosopher, proposes intersubjectivity that is based on a theocentric outlook. He takes into account human persons holistically. Human persons are *being-with-others* in the world, endowed with the capacity to transcend their condition to reach the fullness of being. His ontological participation is composed of three interconnected levels: incarnate subject, subject-others relations and the transcendent, Absolute Thou. He rescues the ontological weight of the human experience. Like Friedrich Nietzsche, Marcel acknowledges the

---

<sup>25</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 4-5, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 8-9.

<sup>27</sup> Buber, *I and Thou*, 135-136.

<sup>28</sup> Frances J. Rofrano, “I/Thou-I/Spirit: Martin Buber and the Spiritual Life of the Infant,” 59. Available from: [http://www.iona.edu/artsscience/orgs/pastoral/issues/2007\\_v42/FrancesJRofrano.pdf](http://www.iona.edu/artsscience/orgs/pastoral/issues/2007_v42/FrancesJRofrano.pdf), accessed: 24 May 2011.

<sup>29</sup> Malcolm L. Diamond, *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 39.



godless condition of humanity. But unlike Nietzsche, who sees the solution in the superman, Marcel sees the solution in the real Transcendent, the God who gives meaning and dignity to human existence and fullness in relationships. His search for the Transcendence begins from the concrete human experience, the subject's personal experience and *in* the context of concrete intersubjective relations.<sup>30</sup> He sees the inextricability of the existential and metaphysical realm of reality and acknowledges the seriousness of the latter in the former. His theocentric perspective of existence has rescued the loss of sacred in the secular. Marcel construes intersubjectivity as inseparable from the Absolute. Thus, this inextricability of intersubjectivity from the Absolute points to the former's ultimate consummation only in the latter.<sup>31</sup>

It is not only that Marcel affirms all that could be true in Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber, when fighting against solipsism and the alienation of human persons, but he also penetrates deeper into the ontological weight of human reality and shows how intersubjectivity is inextricably grounded in the Absolute Reality. J.V. Langmead Casserley argues that Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity moves further than Buber's *I-Thou* relationship. Casserley writes,

The characteristic of human reality is found in the *I-Thou* relationship in which men confront each other not as active subject and passive object but as two subjects each recognizing the other's subjectivity. Marcel goes further and penetrates, I believe, even more profoundly into the heart of the human reality. For him essential human reality is expressed in the first person plural pronoun,

---

<sup>30</sup> David E. Roberts, *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford Press University, 1957), 309-310.

<sup>31</sup> Erwin W. Straus and Michael A. Machado, "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 139.



*We*. Man is not an isolated solitary existence. The human reality is our personal participation in the corporate human existence.<sup>32</sup>

Like Casserley, two other interpreters of Marcel, Erwin W. Straus and Michael A. Machado, argue that Marcel's intersubjectivity springs from a more fundamental ground of reality. In their article, "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," they argue:

Marcel contends that before the I can emerge as a fully conscious subject, before a communion can flower between an I and a Thou, there is already a community of beings bound together by an intersubjective nexus, which is the body. Personal communion is thus founded on a prior community, just as the self is constituted as a self only in its bodily acts. Prior to there being any I or I-Thou, the experience of the lived body is that of a *We*-reality, a feeling of active community with all existing beings bound together with my body as the living center. The I and the Thou are therefore derivatives forms of the *We*. Human embodiment is the experience of our togetherness in being. The experience of a shared community enables the I and the Thou to emerge.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Marcel offers a profound analysis of human reality. He affirms what is true and important in Buber's doctrine, but he goes further than Buber in his *We reality*. To elaborate further, "The I-Thou is an inescapable dimension of the *We*; but the *We* is the ontological ground of the I-Thou . . . [the] 'I-Thou relationship is reinforced from below as well as from above. Its foundation lies in the *We*-reality that constitutes our community with the world. Its transcendent meaning lies in the intimate depths of our communion with God.'"<sup>34</sup> Hence, to Marcel the fullness of life as an individual and human relationships between persons can only be possible when these two notions are grounded in God, the Absolute Thou. The researcher finds Marcel's philosophical

---

<sup>32</sup> Casserley, "Gabriel Marcel," 87-88. See also Straus and Machado, "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," 136.

<sup>33</sup> Straus and Machado, "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," 136-137.

<sup>34</sup> Straus and Machado, "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," 140.



exploration in this area of concern leading him to an in depth research of Marcel's elucidation of intersubjectivity and its relation to the Absolute Thou.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The main question that this study sought to investigate was, "How does Gabriel Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity find its ground in the Absolute Thou?"

Sub-problems:

1. What is the ontology of Gabriel Marcel from which springs his notion of intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou?
2. What is intersubjectivity?
  - a. What is the nature of Marcel's pillars of intersubjectivity: love, fidelity, and hope?
  - b. What is the nature of the I-he/she/it relationship in Marcel's philosophy?
  - c. What is the nature of the I-thou relationship in Marcel's philosophy?
3. What is the Absolute Thou?
  - a. What is Marcel's approach to God, the Absolute Thou?
  - b. What is the nature of God, the absolute Thou as Presence in relation to love, fidelity, and hope in Marcel's philosophy?
4. In what sense, according to Gabriel Marcel, is the Absolute Thou the ground of intersubjectivity in the level of *exigence of being* and in love, faith, and hope?



### Conceptual Framework

Gabriel Marcel's whole philosophy is fundamentally and centrally concerned with *being*. His view of reality is *centrifugal* as he put the accent on human persons' participation in being.<sup>35</sup> Marcel based his metaphysics on his view on the ontology of participation on three interconnected levels: incarnate subject, intersubjectivity and Transcendence.

Marcel exalts the supremacy of existence and endeavors to re-establish the ontological weight of concrete human experience. He recognizes the *mystery* in the concrete. Existence "opens the door to mystery,"<sup>36</sup> and it is the recognition of the *mysterious* character of life that will lead one to an awareness of one's situation as a being participating in the overall *mystery* of Being, God, the Absolute Thou.

The fullness of intersubjectivity is achievable in and through its grounding in the Absolute Thou. In the subject's recognition of his *exigence of being*, he is led to find out that only the Absolute Thou can fulfill such hunger for fullness. In the subject's relation with others, one is also led to discover that the guarantee and ground of all I-thou relationships is God, the Absolute Thou.

Marcel explores human experience or calls for concrete approaches to the transcendence: love, fidelity, and hope for a deeper penetration into the *mystery of being*. Love, fidelity, and hope shed light on the manifestation of the Absolute Thou in human experience. Participation in *being* through intersubjectivity points to the Absolute Thou, the ground and the fulfillment of the I-Thou relationship. Thus the *exigence* for the

---

<sup>35</sup> T.M. Leeuwen, *The Surplus of Meaning: Ontology and Eschatology in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), 15.

<sup>36</sup> Leeuwen, *The Surplus of Meaning*, 17.



unconditional, eternal and fullness, which humans seek in every intersubjective relationship, is found in the concrete. Marcel bridges the chasm between physical and metaphysical, and dissolves the dualism of the abstraction of Rene Descartes. Human reality and relationship is meaningful in the Ultimate reality.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study has bearing on wide-ranging fields that deal with human relationships and social and human sciences, religious practices, education, literature and others as the concept of intersubjectivity is complex, multilayered and interdisciplinary.<sup>37</sup> It offers the fundamental principle for intersubjective relationships.

The study finds its legitimate bearing in confronting and providing insights to some major issues in today's time. Some serious predicaments that this study discusses are the objectification, depersonalization and alienation of human persons in today's scientific and technological age. Such degradation of human persons somehow manifests in some current issues such as racism, unequal interpersonal relations, victimization of the poor due to globalization and profit making, colonialism, civil wars, religious intolerance and bigotry.

Because this study stresses on the theocentric perspective, it offers some insights on nature of God, the Absolute Thou, and as the answer to human persons' deepest questions and needs, and the fulfillment of relationships.

This study also opens an avenue or defines points of connection for a possible appropriation of Marcel's philosophy in Wesley's theology.

---

<sup>37</sup> Nick Crossley, *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), preface.



Moreover, the researcher benefits from the study. He becomes more knowledgeable and equipped with the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. He is more competent in appropriating the philosophy of Marcel in his ministry as he responds to the various needs, already alluded to above, in the current times. The study has bearing on interpersonal, cross-cultural and non-denominational relations and interactions. It has relevance to leadership, clergy-laity relations, and counseling.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Absolute Thou* refers to God as absolute Person and a divine Presence who is relational and experiential and is referred to this study as the ground of intersubjectivity.

*Alienation* is a process of reduction of human persons to the nature of things or objects in which they become stranger to themselves and to their essence.<sup>38</sup>

*Being* has different but interrelated meanings in Marcel: “(1) Being as the foundation grounding every particular being and all experience, (2) being as absolute plenitude, the fulfillment of the ontological exigency, (3) being as said of ‘a being,’ which sheds light on the mysterious connection between being-as-foundation and being as anticipated plenitude.”<sup>39</sup>

*Broken World* characterizes the technocratization, objectification, and functionalization of the human person in the postmodern world—where “men are not

---

<sup>38</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Problematic Man*, trans. Brian Thompson (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 18.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Anderson, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notions of Being,” *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975), 30.



viewed as unique persons but are instead treated solely as objects identifiable with their roles.”<sup>40</sup>

*Correlation method* is the process of analyzing the mutual relationships between two or more variables or concepts or realities in a parallel or complementary manner.

*Exigence of being* is human persons’ intrinsic hunger and demand for fullness and meaning.

*Existentialism* “is a loose title for various philosophies that emphasize common themes: the individual [or subjectivity], the experience of choice [freedom], and the absence of rational understanding of the universe with a consequent dread or sense of absurdity in human life.”<sup>41</sup>

*Ground* is understood in this study as the source in which one moves, lives and has one’s being and without which every particular being and all experience cannot *be* or exist and finds no fulfillment.

*Incarnation* is a situation wherein dualism between self and body ceases. It is also when a being is manifested as basic participant in the world as subject or person; one and unified being.

*Intersubjectivity* is openness to others. It is where one stands in a vital relationship with others. One participates in each other’s being and experience, which involves a deeper union of experiences such as love, fidelity, and hope.

---

<sup>40</sup> Anderson, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notions of Being,” 40.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Blackburn, *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 129-30.



*Ontology* is the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being. It is referred to in this study as the experience of fullness in life that is found in intersubjectivity or the I-thou relationship.

*Participation* refers to an inward act that a subject's whole personality is actively engaged with – it is neither merely a sense perception, nor an intellectual intuition, nor a rational conception.<sup>42</sup>

*Presence* refers to “the mode of existence that is personal. And since the existent cannot be effectively detached from his existing, presence equally signifies the person existing, in this use effectively pointing the contrast of existing with objectivity and with impersonal existing.”<sup>43</sup>

*Problem* is an outlook to reality that construes that reality is subject to finding a solution that requires an appropriate technique. It is dualistic in nature that results to dichotomy between subject-object.

*Mystery* is an outlook toward reality that involves the whole human person. It is opposite of abstraction, and is an experience that involves the whole human person. It is where the dualistic view of life ceases. It reveals the realm of *being* where the human persons are involved in the intersubjective experience of love, fidelity, friendship, evil and the like.

*Reflection* is Marcel's term for the method of his philosophy. It presents itself as a sort of introspection coupled with analysis. It has two forms. *Primary reflection* which is

---

<sup>42</sup> Richard J. Kroner, “Existentialism and Christianity,” *Encounter* 17 (Summer 1956): 219-244. Available from: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=119&sid=5b1f8261-68bc-4d75-a9c0-7770d42f56b6%40sessionmgr110>, accessed: 28 September 2011.

<sup>43</sup> John B. O' Malley, *The Fellowship of Being: An Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 96.



purely analytic and reducing. Contrary to primary reflection is *secondary reflection* which is recuperative or synthetic.<sup>44</sup> The latter is the proper method to approach being according to Marcel.

*Subjectivity* refers to something more personal and more intimate which is hard to measure with words. Subjectivity is not subjectivism. The former is the true interpretation of reality while the latter is the false interpretation of reality.<sup>45</sup>

*The technological age* refers to the condition wherein there is not only an extraordinary multiplication of techniques and mechanical procedures in the world, but also that human beings tend to think of themselves in technical and mechanical terms.<sup>46</sup>

*Thou* refers to a free conscious person with whom one can enter into a genuine personal relationship.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This thesis does not aim at presenting an exposition of the entire philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. Rather, it only focuses on his notions of Absolute Thou and intersubjectivity, specifically on how the former serves as the foundation of the later.

Marcel's unsystematic method of writing presents difficulty in following his intersected and winding thoughts. This then requires much effort from the researcher. Since his notions of intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou overlap with each other and are diffused in his works, the researcher incorporated only those ideas to the subject matter.

---

<sup>44</sup> Gabriel Marcel, "What Can we Expect of Philosophy," *Philosophy Today* 3 (Winter 1959): 261.

<sup>45</sup> Corazon L. Cruz, *Philosophy of Man* (Manila: National Book Store, 1987), 55.

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Marcel, "Sacred in the Technological Age," *Theology Today* 19 (1962): 28, 37.



Because Marcel wrote in French, and because the researcher is not able to read French, he only used the English translations of both primary and secondary sources. Propitiously, there are English translations of Marcel's major philosophical writings.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND STUDIES

#### Biographical Sketch of Gabriel Marcel

Gabriel Marcel, generally regarded as the first French existentialist philosopher, drama critic, playwright and a musician, was born on December 7, 1889. He came from a middle class family. His father was a privy councilor and French Ambassador to Sweden, and the Director of Beaux—Arts of the Bibliotheque Nationale and Musees Nationaux. A former Catholic but later became an agnostic. At the age of 4, Marcel lost his mother and was raised by his father and his mother's sister who eventually married. She was a Jewess Liberal convert to Protestantism, a strong woman of ethical conviction and had religious influence on Marcel. He was brilliant in his studies and demonstrated a clear ability for philosophical inquiries. At the age of eight he began writing plays. During his youth he also displayed an ability to play music. All three, philosophy, writing plays and music, have had a significant role in his thinking.

Marcel took his secondary education at the Lycée Carnot and then went to Sorbonne in 1910 where he earned the Agregation in Philosophy. He taught philosophy in the Lycées in Paris, Vendomee and Sen. In 1914, during World War I, Marcel became a Red Cross official whose task was to gather the news of wounded and soldiers and those who had lost their lives in the battle and to contact their relatives. His experiences during the war had significant influence of his highly existential and personalistic philosophy and lifelong war against what he called the “spirit of abstraction.”



After World War I, in 1919, he married Jacqueline Boegner, a professor at the Schola Cantorum. They adopted a son, Jean. Marcel stayed and taught at Switzerland for a time where he also started writing his journal that was eventually published in 1927 under the title *Journal Métaphysique*. The journal reflected his moving away from traditional philosophy toward one influenced by the writing of Søren Kierkegaard.

Marcel, earlier in his philosophical thinking was attracted to and influenced by the abstract thinking of the idealism of Bradley, Royce and Bergson. He later turned around and revolted against idealism as it undermines concrete and embodied human experience.

Though Marcel's upbringing had been religiously agnostic, his philosophy characterizes religious dimensions of life even when he was not yet a believer. Before his conversion to Catholicism he was first attracted to Protestantism due to his nonconformist attitude, intellectual freedom and connection through his wife who belonged to a Protestant family. He was finally converted to be a Catholic in 1929, after a challenge from a Catholic friend, François Mauriac, that his philosophical views suggested a belief in God. Marcel became a leader in French Catholic intellectual circles, and his home became an avenue for hosting on "Friday evenings" a stimulating discussion among leading European intellectuals of various philosophies. Among the many famous philosophers who were part of the meetings at one time or another were Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Jean Wahl, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Ricoeur relates:

Every Friday evening in his home Gabriel Marcel brought together twenty or so of his disciples and friends; we tried never to cite ready-made analyses or interpretations. Instead, we were required to think on the basis of fresh examples, whether real or imaginary, investigating the ontological



implications of the situation under consideration, exploring new avenues, taking chances, using the resources of our dialogue alone.<sup>1</sup>

Marcel was often contrasted to Sartre with whom he at one time had cordial relations. Marcel reflects the positive, a philosophy of communion whereas Sartre reflects the negative, a philosophy of alienation. Marcel represents theistic existentialism while Sartre represents the atheistic side.

Marcel garnered many intellectual honors like the Grand Prix de Literature of the French Academy in 1948, the Goethe Prize in 1956 and the Grand Prix National de Lettres in 1958. He became associated with Moral Re-Armament, which he discussed in *Fresh Hope for the World: Moral Re-Armament in Action* (1960). He also delivered the Gifford Lectures, entitled "The Mystery of Being" for the 1949-1950 academic year at the University of Aberdeen, and the William James Lectures at Harvard for the 1961-1962.

In 1947, his wife died from a terminal illness. Like that of his mother the death of his wife had a great effect on him. Marcel continued to work, write, and travel. In 1964, at the Frankfurt Book Fair Marcel received major international recognition in the form of the German Peace Prize. On October 8, 1973, he died in Paris.

Marcel's philosophy deals with human reality—despair, suicide, the loss of love ones, loneliness, faith, fidelity, and prayer. He preferred to be called a concrete philosopher than to be called a "Christian existentialist."<sup>2</sup> Katharine Rose Hanley notes:

It is Marcel's goal that philosophic reflection never be merely abstract argument and speculation, but always researched in one's own personal experience as an incarnate being, in a particular concrete situation. His further desire is that whoever studies his thought will do so by entering more and more deeply into his or her own knowledge of the realities discussed, to find

---

<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, "My relation to the History of Philosophy," *The Hijf Review* 35 (1978): 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Kathrine Farrer (Glasgow: The University Press, 1949), 1.



clarification through reasoned analysis of his or her familiarity with that particular mysterious phenomenon.<sup>3</sup>

Marcel's style of philosophizing is unsystematic and conversational. Marcel's way of seeing reality is interwoven in three spheres: music, drama, and philosophy.

Hanley elaborates:

Marcel's theatre allows us to experience the stuff of his inquiries about life. His drama sets out to present, on stage, the conflict that occurs in real incarnate people's lives. The plays invite the audience, if they choose, to reflect not only in relation to the characters on stage, but in relation to their on lives as well. Thus theatre provides privileged entrance into Marcel's philosophic reflection.<sup>4</sup>

Hanley remarks that many prefer Marcel's philosophy, "because he talks about things that are real; like commitment, interpersonal relations, family, creative fidelity, hope versus despair, and God."<sup>5</sup>

One discovers in Gabriel Marcel's writings a gradual maturing of his thoughts—his movement from idealism to philosophy of existence and phenomenological method, and his struggles in reconciling the universal and the particular. His insights and the problems he encountered in his philosophizing are documented in his works. The following reviews are sectioned into the following topics: Marcel's own writings, literature on Marcel's existential ontology, literature related to the relevance of Marcel's philosophy in the present time, and literature and studies on Marcel's intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou.

---

<sup>3</sup> Katharine Rose Hanley, "A Journey to Consciousness: Gabriel Marcel's Relevance for the Twenty- First-Century Classroom," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 80 (2006): 461. Available from: <http://gms.lemoyne.edu/documents/0002.pdf>, accessed: 5 July 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Hanley, "A Journey to Consciousness," 466.

<sup>5</sup> Hanley, "A Journey to Consciousness," 462.



### Marcel's Own Writings

At first Gabriel Marcel was fascinated with idealism, but he turned against it later. His own experiences and reflections on his experiences during the World War I as a non-combatant soldier served as the framework for his first book, *Metaphysical Journal*<sup>6</sup> in 1927, which became the first work of existential philosophy during the twentieth century. This work shows his reaction and his moving away from traditional academic philosophy, and also the influence of Søren Kierkegaard on him. It also reflects the starting of the concrete and personalistic philosophy of Marcel. He campaigns against abstraction and idealism. His aim is to rescue the ontological weight of the human existence. Eight years later (1935), his book *Being and Having* was published. It includes some portions of the *Metaphysical Journal*, supplemented by three short papers. Some parts of the *Journal* reveal his reception into the Roman Catholic Church. The book basically presents Marcel's reaction to idealism. Marcel discusses two opposing outlooks of the self and body—the *being* and *having*. The former sees the subject as a being in a situation while the later regards the subject as a mere object and function. Marcel deals here ontologically and metaphysically. Its existential themes include being-in-the-world, facticity, embodiment, freedom, and the necessity of transcendence.

During 1961-62 academic year, Marcel gave the William James Lecture at Harvard University which was subsequently published the following year, 1963, as *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*.<sup>7</sup> This is another place where he elaborates his reaction against the spirit of abstraction at work in the world in the forms of technology and political ideology. Through drama and philosophy, Marcel

---

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall (London: Rockliff, 1952).

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963).



attempted to show what is a true human community of persons where human dignity is realized. The eight chapters of this book present various, but interrelated, ideas pointing towards Marcel's theme on the notion of self which refutes the traditional understanding upon self-consciousness. These are participation, existence, fidelity, ontological mystery, the self and ambiguity, human dignity, morality, hope and freedom, and a threat to integrity.

In *Man Against Mass Society*<sup>8</sup> Marcel argues with many issues that have caused the *broken world*, and maintains that the underlying cause for the same is the arrogance in undermining the mystery of the Absolute's presence. The book argues that the problems human persons face are not social or material, but metaphysical. The book is relevant to the study as it shows the failure and dilemma of reliance on materialism, which turns human persons into objects.

A more focused discussion on the realm of the problematic and the mystery is presented in his "Sacred in the Technological Age."<sup>9</sup> He emphasizes that human beings tend to be more of the world and think of themselves in technical or mechanical terms, which only trample upon the sacredness of the human person. The fact is that such condition only brings havoc to the human person and hence there is a need for a conversion for the sacred to reveal itself.

*The Mystery of Being: Reflection and Mystery*, volume I,<sup>10</sup> and *Mystery of Being: Faith and Reality*, volume II<sup>11</sup> contain the series of Gifford Lectures given by

---

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, trans. G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> Gabriel Marcel, "Sacred in the Technological Age," *Theology Today* 19 (1962): 27-38. Available from: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e-c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107>, accessed: 27 June 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 1, *Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (London: The Harvill Press, 1951).



Marcel in 1949 and 1950 at the University of Aberdeen. These two volumes are considered his greatest writing as it provides excellent comprehensive and a unified presentation of his philosophical inquiries. These two lectures set forth more of his concern with *mystery*, which should be explored if one is to understand a wider-range of reality, and his thoughts on eternity. These lectures have an existential theme and make a strong argument for religious faith. Volume I, *Reflection and Mystery I*, examines the *exigence* or the deep-rooted interior urge for the transcendence that is intrinsic to human persons in the experience of the “broken world.” It explores truth, the feeling as a mode of participation, life togetherness (intersubjectivity), and presence as a *mystery*. All of these contribute to the present study. Volume II takes *Faith and Reality* as its sub-title. It focuses on mystery as its starting point. It discusses existence and being, distinguishes opinion and faith, and provides an existential interpretation of Christian subjects such as prayer and humility, freedom and grace, and death and hope. Moreover, this volume provides the meaning of being as the foundation or ground as the intersubjective nexus—where all intersubjective relations and ontology itself are founded.

Another meaning of being is found in the *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, in which being is the ultimate foundation of all beings, thought and experience. Being grounds the individual’s existence or incarnate being in the world.<sup>12</sup>

Marcel sets forth the subject of theism in the relational sense in his article, “Theism and Personal Relationship.”<sup>13</sup> He starts with his criticism of the abstract and

---

<sup>11</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 2, *Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague, (London: The Harvill Press, 1951).

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel, “Theism and Personal Relationship,” *Cross Currents* 1 (Fall 1950): 35-42. Available from: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e->



negative outlook of theism, and then moves to the positive outlook that opens the relationship between the finite and the Infinite. According to Marcel, only when God is invoked as a Thou, an Absolute Thou, is that relationship between human persons and God viable. Marcel concludes his article with two possible outcomes in approaching theism: “If Theism is considered in the abstract and in terms of objectivity, the question of personal relationships will in the end prove insoluble; yet, on the contrary, the elements of a solution will be all the more numerous and illuminating if Theism is considered in the only light possible, the light of Revelation.”<sup>14</sup>

*Creative Fidelity* is Marcel’s important collection of lectures and essays that he regarded as the best introduction to his thought. This book deals with the themes of faith, fidelity, belief, incarnate being, and participation. It presents a practical application of Marcel’s concrete approach to his philosophy. In relation to the study, it informs the research particularly to the exposition of fidelity as one of Marcel’s concrete approaches in the transcendent.<sup>15</sup>

*Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, another collection of Marcel’s essays, explores the human’s pilgrimage in the world where they are in flight. He identifies the predicament in modern humans but also finds that the human person is essentially a being, *homo viator*. In his analysis of hope, marriage and vows, he shows that a person’s journey is directed towards the transcendent. Marcel

---

[c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107&bquery=\(gabriel+AND+marcel\)&bdata=JmRiPXJmaCZjbGkwPUZUJmNsdjA9WSZ0eXBIPTEmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl](http://www.gabrielmarcel.com/c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107&bquery=(gabriel+AND+marcel)&bdata=JmRiPXJmaCZjbGkwPUZUJmNsdjA9WSZ0eXBIPTEmc2l0ZT1laG9zdC1saXZl), accessed: 1 July 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Marcel, “Theism and Personal Relationship,” 42.

<sup>15</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. with an introduction by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964).



concludes that a human's condition which urgently needs hope finds its fulfillment in interpersonal relations, in the presence of the Absolute Thou.<sup>16</sup>

In the same way, in his autobiography, the *Awakenings*, Marcel points to the essential ground of hope in the human condition and beyond. He relates his conversion from idealism to existential phenomenology and shows how transcendental reality can be present in the very being of human persons. Along with hope, other themes such as presence, community, I-Thou, hope, despair, commitment, and creative fidelity, truth, and love are stressed here. The book is written in a conversational style. His approach is concrete and critically reflective.<sup>17</sup>

If Sartre and Heidegger define their philosophy of existence atheistically, Marcel's is the counter point. In his *Philosophy of Existence*, Marcel shows an escape from a person's state of nothingness to transcendence, God. He shows here how the subject is related to the reality of the transcendent God who is recognizable as real in the concrete.<sup>18</sup>

The relevance of Gabriel Marcel's philosophy in the present time is no doubt justifiable. *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*,<sup>19</sup> edited by Brendan Sweetman and published this year, 2011, speaks in today's various human exigencies. This book presents a broad selection of Marcel's works. It is organized around his major themes and readers can directly go to the desired topic as they are systematically arranged. All of

---

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962).

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Awakenings*, trans. Peter S. Rogers (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949).

<sup>19</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, ed. Brendan Sweetman (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2011).



Marcel's main ideas are presented here, like his philosophy of the human person, God and religion, concrete approaches, to name a few.

### **Literature Related to the Relevance of Marcel's Philosophy in the Present Time**

Gerald F. Kreyche in his short article, "Gabriel Marcel and the Contemporary Scene"<sup>20</sup> aligns Marcel in the tradition of Kierkegaard, Pascal, Augustine and Socrates who were concerned with interpersonal relationships in which love is the central theme. Kreyche identifies Marcel's legacy as rescuing the ontological weight of being. Marcel brought back the individual in the realm of personhood, and helps one to see the universal truth in the singular existent.

Patrick Bourgeois tends to be in agreement with Kreyche and expounds further on Marcel's bearing in the postmodern age in his article "Catholic Author, Musician, Philosopher: Gabriel Marcel in Postmodern Dialogue," elaborating Marcel's place in contemporary philosophy. Bourgeois argues for Marcel's relevance in the postmodern situation. His works and essential themes "provide for the retrieval of the meaning of human existence by reawakening the creativity at the heart of human beings."<sup>21</sup> He adds that Marcel's philosophy plays a "corrective force to postmodern deconstruction."<sup>22</sup> Bourgeois illustrates this creativity and relevance of Marcel by going back to his works, his autobiography, musical compositions, dramatic works as well as his philosophical reflections.

---

<sup>20</sup> Gerald F. Kreyche, "Gabriel Marcel and the Contemporary," *Philosophy Today* 8 (Winter 1964): 246-247.

<sup>21</sup> Patrick Bourgeois, "Catholic Author, Musician, Philosopher: Gabriel Marcel in Postmodern Dialogue," *Renascence* 55 (Spring 2003): 193-208.

<sup>22</sup> Bourgeois, "Catholic Author, Musician, Philosopher," 193.



Etienne Gilson calls Gabriel Marcel “A Unique Philosopher.”<sup>23</sup> Marcel’s philosophy, he contends, “is greater than any academic study just as it overflows his written works. The thought of Marcel does not have philosophy for the object. It is not *about* philosophy. It is philosophy.”<sup>24</sup> Gilson goes on to elaborate that Marcel provides a “philosophical foundation for mysticism”— which becomes his whole work. Moreover, Gilson highlights Marcel’s criticism of both abstraction and any systematic approach to philosophy. To Marcel, according to Gilson, a systematic approach cannot do justice to being as it only reduces being into an object of thought. He contends that to Marcel, philosophy is more of a journey - a call and invocation towards the Absolute Thou.

#### **Literature Related to Marcel’s Existential Ontology**

The following books serve their goal well as general prolegomenon to the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel and the basic themes on his ontology: Francis J. Lescoe’s *Existentialism With or Without God* and David E. Robert’s *Existentialism and Religious Belief*. There are excellent books that help as guides to Marcel’s philosophy as they have synthesized and systematized his winding reflections in his numerous works: Kenneth Gallagher’s *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* stresses the “contour of Marcel’s thought” and shows Marcel’s philosophical importance; Vincent Miceli’s *Ascent to Being: Gabriel Marcel’s Philosophy of Communion* presents a blueprint of Marcel’s philosophy towards transcendence; Thomas J.M. van Ewijk’s *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*; and John O’Malley’s *The Fellowship of Being: An*

---

<sup>23</sup> Etienne Gilson, “A Unique Philosopher,” *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 278-281.

<sup>24</sup> Gilson, “A Unique Philosopher,” 278.



*Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* analyses Marcel's concept of person.<sup>25</sup>

With brevity and clarity Thomas Bush sketches Marcel's philosophy in, "Gabriel Marcel: An Overview and Assessment." Two little known expressions of Marcel, the "hypo-problematic being" and "hyper-problematic being" which are significant in approaching his philosophical world are dealt here. Bush further shows Marcel's unique ontology dominated by the notions of totality and unity opposed to the ontologies of Sartre and Camus which were filled with fragmentation and opposition. The article also deals with Marcel's basic themes such as incarnation, invocation, and being.<sup>26</sup>

There are differences in opinion among Marcel's interpreters as to whether Marcel implies that secondary reflection is a philosophical mode of reflection. Differences in their interpretations reflect that secondary reflection is the realm of religious faith, neither religious nor a reflection at all, while others claim it is a reflection but it is illumined by the mystery of being. Thomas A. Michaud's article entitled, "Secondary Reflection and Marcelian Anthropology"<sup>27</sup> examines Marcel's concept and use of secondary reflection in metaphysics. He exposes the philosophical character of secondary reflection and its relationship to the distinction of problem and mystery. Michaud also shows the use and merits of secondary reflection by looking at the relation of anthropological *cum* metaphysical mysteries of human freedom and the

---

<sup>25</sup> Francis J. Lescoe, *Existentialism With or Without God* (New York: Alba House, 1974); David E. Robert, *Existentialism and Religious Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957); Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1963); Thomas J.M. van Ewijk, *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1965); John O'Malley, *The Fellowship of Being: An Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nihoff, 1966).

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Bush, "Gabriel Marcel: An Overview and Assessment," *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 4-11.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas A Michaud, "Secondary Reflection and Marcelian Antropology," *Philosophy Today* 34 (Fall 1990): 222-228.



person as an *incarnate being*—an understanding of humans as persons (not objects) and basically manifested and participants beings in the world.

*The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent*,<sup>28</sup> written by Brendan Sweetman, is a thorough exposition of Marcel's philosophy of the nature of human knowledge, the human person, and transcendence. It is a unique and an advanced work on Marcel. It does not present his philosophy as systematic. It also does not deal with traditional themes (like ethics and transcendence) but with epistemological issues. This work contributes to the study as it provides a background of Marcel's philosophy. Sweetman's study is a critique of modern philosophy, especially in the abstraction of Cartesian philosophy. Sweetman's exposition of Marcel's themes such as self, human subject, being-in-a-situation, secondary reflection, and transcendence are helpful to this study.

M. Kevin O'Hara's "Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel"<sup>29</sup> claims that the notion of person is central to Marcel's philosophy. Marcel, she writes, is committed to make human beings become aware of their dignity through persistent reflection upon the human situation. In his article, "In Search of Meaning: Marcelian Phenomenological Approach to a Study of the Protagonists in two Stories,"<sup>30</sup> Leni R. Garcia proposes that Marcel the *broken world* where individuals are objectified and disintegrated necessitates secondary reflection. That is where one is not seen as a thing but as a person who is open to engage and to participate with others in intersubjective relations.

---

<sup>28</sup> Brendan Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent* (New York: Rodopi, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> M. Kevin O'Hara's "Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel," *Philosophy Today* 8 (Fall 1964): 147-154.

<sup>30</sup> Leni R. Garcia, "In search of Meaning: Marcelian Phenomenological Approach to a Study of the Protagonists in Two Stories," *Sophia* 24 (1994-1995): 246-260.



### Literature and Studies on Marcel's Notion of Intersubjectivity

Some commentators of Marcel limit their interpretation of *being* to the sphere of intersubjectivity or participation. Mary Aloysius' article, "Freedom and the I: An Existential Inquiry," tends to confine being to the realm of intersubjectivity and to that which can be freely chosen. Arthur Luther's "Metaphysics of The We Are," and S. Zuidema's "Gabriel Marcel: A Critique," Vincent Miceli's book *Ascent to Being* and S. Keen's *Gabriel Marcel* tend to limit *being* to what Anderson calls the plenitude of being.<sup>31</sup>

Arthur Luther's "The Metaphysics of the We Are,"<sup>32</sup> emphasizes the ontological weight of concrete human experience as the starting point of Marcel's metaphysics, Luther shows that every human person from the very beginning is primordially situated in a participated community - "the sole ground of one's encounter with the world and his dialogue with other men."<sup>33</sup> God as the absolute Presence, he contends, is the absolute ground of such community. Luther, in his reference to the Being of Marcel as God, the absolute Presence, also affirms human beings' freedom of response to the call of Being which grounds them. Luther answers one of the issues that confront contemporary philosophers by taking an affirmative position with Marcel. Luther contends that it is possible to retain the value of subjective depth without losing hold of the universal validity of a human being's experience.

---

<sup>31</sup> Mary Aloysius, "Freedom and the I: An Existential Inquiry," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1963): 580-599; S. Zuidema, "Gabriel Marcel: A Critique," *Philosophy Today* 4 (1960). 283-288; Vincent Miceli, *Ascent to Being: Gabriel's Philosophy of Communion* (New York: Desclee Company, 1965); Sam Keen, *Gabriel Marcel* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967).

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Luther, "Metaphysics of The We Are," *Philosophy Today* 8 (Fall 1966): 190-203.

<sup>33</sup> Luther, "The Metaphysics of the We Are," 201.



Rainer Ibana's "A Neo-Thomistic Presentation of Gabriel Marcel's Metaphysics of Participation" shows how Marcel's thought-framework contains the Platonic structure of participation as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas. Ibana observes that the obvious difference between Marcel and Aquinas is in the sources of participation, while the basic structural formulations of participation seem to be similar. Marcel's metaphysics springs from the human subject while St. Thomas' was grounded on God.<sup>34</sup>

Pedro Adams's "Marcel: Metaphysician or Moralist"<sup>35</sup> contends that Marcel "ontologizes about ethical themes" and that his philosophy is metaphysical in language and moral in content. Incarnation serves as the epistemological basis of being and being itself and establishes and explains the identity of both metaphysics and morals. In incarnation, *being* is construed as a *mystery* and not as a *problem*, that is, *being* is beyond the realm of objects. Being also relates to freedom and free commitment. *Being* is found in one's being-in-a-situation in the world. It manifests itself in one's *exigence of being*, the need for meaning and fullness. Adams claims that there is an essential relationship between fidelity and being. He contends that fidelity "gives us a grasp of being" and this is seen in the context of incarnation, in the context of intersubjectivity in its aspect of love and hope, and in fidelity as faith where it shows "being in relation to God which founds our relation to others."<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Rainer Ibana, "A Neo-Thomistic Presentation of Gabriel Marcel's Metaphysics of Participation," *Unitas* 58 (September 1985): 246-260.

<sup>35</sup> Pedro Adams, "Marcel: Metaphysician or Moralist," *Philosophy Today* 10 (Fall 1966): 182-189.

<sup>36</sup> Adams, "Marcel: Metaphysician or Moralist," 188.



A more detailed study on fidelity is conducted in Rebecca G. Villanueva's thesis, "Gabriel Marcel on Creative Fidelity."<sup>37</sup> Villanueva shows fidelity as grounded in Being. Creative fidelity is seen and lived out in intersubjectivity. But intersubjectivity is not only limited to the relationship between human beings. Insofar as the Absolute is a presence, it is also intersubjectivity.

In the same way Clyde Pax's "Marcel's Way of Creative Fidelity" shows how "creative fidelity is an authentic experience of transcendence, carrying immediately within its ontological weight and transcendental clout. Creativity is the experience that reveals the bond between existence and being as intersubjectivity and reveals the congeniality of metaphysical and religious experience."<sup>38</sup> Pax contends that fidelity is the "necessary condition for the existence and reality of the personal realm."<sup>39</sup> He contends further that it is in intersubjectivity that fidelity is realized and nurtured. It is also in fidelity, he shows, that the question about God is possible. Like Villanueva and Pax, Manuel Dy's "From Fidelity to Faith: A Marcellian Approach"<sup>40</sup> contends that fidelity points to intersubjectivity and to God. Dy approaches faith by starting his analysis from concrete human experience. He shows too how fidelity is open to faith in God.

Hope is another approach of Marcel to transcendence, which is found and experienced in the context of intersubjectivity. In "Gabriel Marcel on Hope,"<sup>41</sup> Martin A. Bertman argues that hope is both the door to the mind of Marcel and is his

---

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca G. Villanueva, "Gabriel Marcel on Creative Fidelity" (M.A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1979).

<sup>38</sup> Clyde Pax, "Marcel's Way of Creative Fidelity," *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 18-19.

<sup>39</sup> Pax, "Marcel's Way of Creative Fidelity," 17.

<sup>40</sup> Manuel B. Dy Jr., "From Fidelity to Faith: A Marcellian Approach," in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986).

<sup>41</sup> Martin A. Bertman, "Gabriel Marcel on Hope," *Philosophy Today* 14 (1970): 101-105.



significant contribution to philosophy. Marcel dissociates hope and desire. It is Marcel's Christian allegiance, according to Bertman, that enlightens his reflections on hope. While hope is available to all persons, Bertman shows that in Marcel the unbelievers hope exists partially. Bertman claims that Marcel's philosophy of hope leaves one with commitment and inner illumination that points to its source, God and towards eternity.

Jun Trinidad in "Gabriel Marcel: An Existentialist's Phenomenology of Being"<sup>42</sup> specifically explores the unique and new way of Marcel's recovery of the very essence of *being*. He argues that Marcel's *being* is no less than "incarnated being in the world" and not the abstract being of Kant, Hegel, and others. He contends that only this incarnate perception of *being* it transcends the abstraction of modern philosophy. This leads to the emergence of intersubjectivity, the metaphysics of "We are". Trinidad argues that Marcel's philosophy is grounded in the phenomenology

A significant and in-depth study in Marcel's intersubjectivity is written by M. Aloysius Schaldenbrand in her article "Gabriel Marcel: Philosopher of Intersubjectivity."<sup>43</sup> She describes the concept of Marcel's intersubjectivity in his attempt to reconcile the two opposing polarities, individuality and universality. Marcel believes there to be a mediating synthesis - the concrete universal. Schaldenbrand shows that the intersubjective mystery in Marcel's philosophy, which is rightly construed in the realm of the non-objectifiable and is made plain and existential in drama, has its ontological bearing as it restores the ontological weight of human experience.

---

<sup>42</sup> Jun Trinidad, "Gabriel Marcel: An Existentialist's Phenomenology of Being," *Sophia* 20 (September-December 1990): 69-84.

<sup>43</sup> M. Aloysius Schaldenbrand, "Gabriel Marcel: Philosopher of Intersubjectivity," in John K. Ryan, ed. *Twentieth-Century Thinkers: Studies in the Work of Seventeen Modern Philosophers* (New York: Alba House, 1965), 107-130.



Esther Mendoza-Pacheco's unpublished thesis, "Being-For Others in J.P. Sartre and G. Marcel: A Comparative Study,"<sup>44</sup> finds that, on the one hand, Sartre's *Being-For-Others* leads to nihilism, negative character, and the eradication of the other – pointing to an absurd world. On the other hand, Marcel's *Being-For-Others* manifests positive and constructive communion with others engendered by profound meaningfulness.

### Literature and Studies on Marcel's Notion of the Absolute Thou

*Being* is the heart of Marcel's thought. His philosophy is a journey from existence toward *being*. This is fundamental to Marcel's thought. Marcel's interpreters locate in *being* his concepts on *mystery*, presence, Thou, fidelity, love, faith and others.

Thomas Anderson discusses the notion of *being* comprehensively in his, "Gabriel Marcel's Notions of Being."<sup>45</sup> *Being* as a foundation, he contends, is the basis of all intersubjective relations. He argues, though, that Marcel's *being* is not only confined to one meaning. Anderson's exposition of Marcel's view of *being* is divided into three parts: (1) *being* as foundation or ground and unity of all beings as the the unifying foundation of what exists; (2) *being* as foundation as intersubjective unity which is the basis of all beings or subjects and intersubjective relations; (3) and *being* as an absolute plenitude, *pleroma*, even as an absolute super-being - the "most genuine being." He contends that the connection between being and intersubjectivity in the second meaning of being does not involve free choice. Thus, one's grounding with other beings is inescapable in one's primordially grounding with being itself.

---

<sup>44</sup> Esther Mendoza-Pacheco, "Being-For-Others in J.P. Sartre and G. Marcel: A Comparative Study" (M.A. thesis, Saint Louis University, 1971).

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Anderson, "Gabriel Marcel's Notions of Being," *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975), 29-49.



One is affirmed as person (and not merely as an object or a thing) in the participation in *being*. Marcel describes God, the Absolute Thou, as absolute plenitude, *pleroma*, or an absolute super-being, the unity of all beings.

In his comprehensive treatment of most of Marcel's themes, Rudolph J. Gerber in his article, "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics,"<sup>46</sup> contends that the positive approach to God is in the context of intersubjective relations wherein *otherness* is seen in the metaphysical dimension. It is here that the evidence of the absolute takes place. In the same line of thought, Donald McCarthy's "Marcel's Absolute Thou" argues that "intersubjectivity and the inner need for transcendence within the realm of experience constitutes the point of departure of Marcel's consideration of God."<sup>47</sup>

In his in-depth study on Marcel's philosophical treatises, J.J. Benefield in his doctoral thesis, "The Place of God in the Thought of Gabriel Marcel,"<sup>48</sup> seeks to determine the place of God and the role of religious thought in Marcel's work. Benefield shows that God is central in the thought of Marcel. He contends that being is identifiable with God, that mystery of being is the ontological counterpart of the mystery of God, the *exigence for being* is translated as *exigence* for God, and the ontological plane, "to be or not to be" is understood as fundamental options in Marcel's dialectic of meaning of life - to believe or not to believe in God. This comprehensive study of God through the thoughts of Marcel is beneficial to the present study as it lays down the foundation for a clearer understanding of Marcel's Being as God.

---

<sup>46</sup> Rudolph J. Gerber, "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics," *Philosophy Today* 12 (Winter 1968): 262-281.

<sup>47</sup> Donald McCarthy, "Marcel's Absolute Thou," *Philosophy Today* 10 (Fall 1966): 175-181.

<sup>48</sup> J.J. Benefield, "The Place of God in the Thought of Gabriel Marcel" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1973).



In his book, *Christianity and Existentialism*,<sup>49</sup> J.M. Spier contends that philosophy for Marcel seeks and discovers the meaning of *mystery* in the existence of the person. An authentic life is realized only in relationship to God, the Absolute Thou. God serves as the foundation of human persons' existence and this sharing of relationship with God is realizable through participation. Maria Cecilia G. Muller's unpublished thesis entitled, "A Critical Analysis of the Meaning of Human Existence in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel,"<sup>50</sup> argues that the meaning of existence is attainable in the mystery level where the ontological is affirmed and the transcendental is participated in.

Vincent P. Miceli's book *Ascent to Being: Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion* organizes the main themes of Marcel in a fresh way. His key term is "community." One of Miceli's emphases is that there is a plurality of meanings of communion where it designates free, intersubjective relationships among human beings in their personal reality. He also suggests that the *mystery* of communion can never be exhausted by the intersubjective relations of human beings. True communion is open only to God's initiative.

Filipino philosopher Manuel B. Dy in *Philosophy of Man*<sup>51</sup> presents some readings written by Marcel himself as well as articles about Marcel from other Filipino thinkers. Marcel's notions of the Absolute Thou and intersubjectivity are both expounded on from the Filipino viewpoint.

---

<sup>49</sup> "Marcel" in J. M. Spier, *Christianity and Existentialism*, trans. David Hugh Freeman (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953): 43-51.

<sup>50</sup> Maria Cecilia G. Muller, "A Critical Analysis of the Meaning of Human Existence in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel" (M.A. thesis, Saint Louis University, 1969).

<sup>51</sup> Manuel B. Dy, Jr., *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986).



Gary Clark's "God and Experience: Rejuvenation-Hope-Participation,"<sup>52</sup> an essay he dedicated with admiration and appreciation to the memory and presence of Marcel, brings afresh the concept of God and experience in Marcel's secondary reflection. Clark shows that in Marcel, rejuvenation and hope are found in and through the experience of participation within God. Clark's article is a good example of relating how an authentic philosopher-in-dialogue, like Marcel, can leave his influence and philosophic integrity intact.

Seymour Cain's *Gabriel Marcel's Religious Experience* is an excellent contribution to the scholarship of Marcel's philosophy. His thesis is that "Marcel has located the religious in the realm of ontological participation, of *thou*-presence and intersubjectivity, and of incarnate existence; that he has demonstrated that the essential religious intentionality may be revealed in the basic situations of human existence; and that he has recreated the living wholes of religious and existential experience with poetic-dramatic genius."<sup>53</sup> Cain delves deep into Marcel's own original works and words. He tends to be faithful to Marcel's style - his approach is a non-systematic presentation of Marcel's thought.

### **Conclusion**

The translation Marcel's works from French to English made him well known internationally. The secondary authors presented in this chapter, representing the West and the East, show a worldwide acceptance of Marcel's philosophy. One aspect of his philosophy, which is congenial to many people, is its existential and relational elements and a positive outlook to life. The reviewed literatures and studies in this

---

<sup>52</sup> Gary Clark, "God and Experience: Rejuvenation-Hope-Participation," *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 68-75.

<sup>53</sup> Seymour Cain, *Gabriel Marcel's Religious Experience* (New York: Peter Lang Inc., 1995), xi-xii.



chapter showed expositions of Marcel's different aspects of philosophy related to his notions of intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou. The place of the present study focuses more on the inextricability of the basic pillars of intersubjectivity such as love, fidelity, and hope, and *exigence of being* and their relationship to the Absolute Thou. As other studies focuses more on fidelity and hope as basic to the other elements of intersubjectivity, the present study explore on love as basic to fidelity and hope.



## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN

#### Methodology

The qualitative nature of the present study required descriptive research, specifically exposition. The research also employed the correlation principle as it involves two interrelated concepts found in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel.

The expository aspect of this study “makes known what is hidden in the philosopher’s concept, not a mere rehashing of what is already known about a philosopher’s concept.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, through exposition the researcher has shown the meaning, nature and orientation of the concepts of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou in the philosophy of Marcel.

A correlational study is designed to analyze the reciprocal relationships between two or more variables in a parallel or complementary manner - like in the case of theological system wherein concepts are properly related to other concepts.<sup>2</sup> The principle of correlation can be utilized in three ways according to Paul Tillich. First, it can indicate the close connection or equivalence of different series of data; second, it can signify the logical interdependence of concepts; and third, it can show the things’ or events’ real interdependence in structural wholes.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel D. Batoon, *A Guide to Thesis Writing in Philosophy Part 1. Proposal Writing* (Manila: Rejn Publishing, 2005), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Jose Antonio E. Aureada, *Thesis Writing for Theology Students: A Primer* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009), 43; Donald Leroy Stults, *Developing Asian Evangelical Theology* (Manila: OM Literature, 1989), 225.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1967), 60.



The correlation method showed and qualified the relationship between the human persons' intersubjective relation and the Absolute Thou. The method analyses human existence and its orientation to the Absolute. The *exigence of being* in an intersubjective relation invokes the Absolute Thou. The pillars of intersubjectivity such as love, fidelity, and hope paved the way to a deeper penetration into the transcendent reality. Thus, the relationship of an intersubjective relationship and the Absolute Thou show mutual relation, the latter fulfills the *exigence of being* of the former and that is verifiable in the human existence. Through a co-relational method, the researcher elucidates Marcel's precious insight on the grounding of intersubjectivity in the Absolute Thou.

### **Sources of Data**

The researcher has the access to a good collection of resources of Marcel's philosophy. Marcel's most significant philosophical works which are relevant to the study include the following: *Being and Having* (1949), *Metaphysical Journal* (1952), *Man against Mass Society* (1962), *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (1962), and *Creative Fidelity* (1964), *Searchings* (1967), *The Philosophy of Existentialism* (1995), and *Presence and Immortality* (1967), translated by Michael A. Machado and others.

*The Mystery of Being Volume I: Reflection and Mystery* and *Volume II: Faith and Reality* (1950-51) are both compilations of Marcel's Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen during the 1949-50 academic year and are considered some of his greatest works which have a more organized style of presentation. *Mystery of Being II* and *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond* (1973) are important books where Marcel identifies Being, and the Absolute Thou, as a foundation.



A noted philosophical resource, *The Library of Living Philosophers*, presents a very important publication on the thoughts of Marcel in *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (1984), edited by its founder Paul Arthur Schilpp with Lewis Edwin Hahn. The book presents Marcel's intellectual autobiography, collections of critical and interpretive essays by many philosophers, and Marcel's response to each of his interpreters.

This research also made reference to numerous secondary literature including studies that basically made use of descriptive and critical inquiries on Marcel's basic tenets and themes. These sources helped the researcher as guides to the proper interpretation and evaluation of Marcel's thought.

The researcher also consulted many volumes of articles from philosophical journals, published internationally and local: *Philosophy Today*, *The New Scholasticism*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, *Renascence*, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *Unitas*, and *Sophia*. The researcher also looked at the *Gabriel Marcel Society* online site which has compiled many of Marcel's essays and written articles written about him.

### **Research-Gathering Procedure**

The researcher used free-online sites in philosophy to download available e-books and articles: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (SEP), and International Encyclopedia of Philosophy (IEP).

The research was also conducted in the following libraries: the Ecclesiastical Library of University of Santo Tomas (UST), Manila; Rizal Library of Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), Manila; and Saint Louis University (SLU) library, Baguio City.



### Treatment of Data

The researcher utilized a combination of methods in treating the collected data: getting information, doing exposition and triangulation, and then arriving at correlation and synthesis.

First, the researcher organized the collected data into three major themes for the exposition: Marcel's existential ontology, intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou. A chapter was allotted to the discussion of the existential ontology of Marcel which served as a prolegomenon to his notions of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou.

Second, the researcher did an exposition through a documentary or content analysis on the notions of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou. Each of these notions was presented in a separate chapter: intersubjectivity first, then the Absolute Thou. Two important reasons explain the order of the presentation of concepts: firstly, by nature intersubjectivity in the philosophy of Marcel marks the point of departure for the consideration of God, the Absolute Thou. Thus, it is logical to discuss first the concept of intersubjectivity before the concept of Absolute Thou; and secondly, intersubjectivity points to and affirms the Absolute Thou as its ground.

Moreover, the researcher employed triangulation which is the process of "cross-checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce a full and balance study as possible."<sup>4</sup> Hence, the researcher analysis and reflects on Marcel's primary sources as well the secondary sources' interpretations. Through triangulation the researcher hopes to come up with a balance and reliable study.

---

<sup>4</sup> Judith Bell, *Doing Research Project*, second ed. (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993), 64.



Third, the exposition of the notions of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou led to the correlation of the two notions. The study showed how intersubjectivity is grounded in the Absolute Thou.

### **Feasibility of Study**

The researcher has the access of many major works of Marcel translated in English language. Secondary resources like books and journals are also adequate, available and accessible to the researcher.



## CHAPTER 4

### MARCEL'S EXISTENTIAL ONTOLOGY: A PROLEGOMENON TO THE NOTIONS OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND ABSOLUTE THOU

Gabriel Marcel's philosophy has been grounded and guided by the question of being.<sup>1</sup> From the method of his philosophy to its substance or content, one would notice a philosophy that aims not to research on *being* but rather attempts to find and participate in being. This chapter discusses the existential ontology of Marcel which is fundamental for understanding his concepts of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou.

#### Philosophy as Participation: Concrete Philosophy to Concrete Ontology

Philosophy, to Gabriel Marcel, is more of "an aid [to] discovery," a quest, rather than a way of strict demonstration of sets of doctrine.<sup>2</sup> To him philosophy is not a system of purely logical propositions bound for verification and exposition, but rather it is an open inquiry.<sup>3</sup> It is for this reason that Marcel's method of philosophizing has been non-systematic and non-objective.<sup>4</sup> Philosophy for Marcel is

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Anderson, "Gabriel Marcel's Notions of Being," *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 30. See also Clyde Pax, *An Existential Approach to God: A Study of Gabriel Marcel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 1. See further, Donald McCarthy, "Marcel's Absolute Thou," *Philosophy Today* 10 (Fall 1966): 180. Jeanne Parain-Vial describes Marcel as "awake to being, attentive to being, is faithful to being" in "Notes on the Ontology of Gabriel Marcel," *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 281.

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 1, *Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. with an introduction by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964), 61.

<sup>4</sup> Often Marcel's thoughts are overlapped with each other and diffused in his entire works. Therefore it is very difficult to position and the elusiveness of his thoughts makes it hard for one to



the opposite of the scientific method. Science aims to systematize, universalize things that are empirically verifiable and explainable to everyone. A systematic approach deals with and ends up to abstraction, wherein thinking is the essence of life and concept is detached from reality. The level of abstraction is the domain of conceptualization wherein it does not require a *concrete or embodied situation* of an inquirer or questioner.<sup>5</sup> For Marcel, systems imply a completion that means, “thinking has arrived at some stopping place.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, abstraction does not give justice to reality, for reality itself cannot be reduced or summed up. To Marcel, it is absurd if not arrogant for one to think that reality as a whole could be captured in a logical proposition and claimed as one’s original philosophical system.<sup>7</sup> Clyde Pax rightly puts it when he maintains that to Marcel, “our experience of reality exceeded in significant ways the limits of any systematic explanation, and that therefore the attempt to construct a system of total meaning of reality would be a betrayal of our experience.”<sup>8</sup>

Although Marcel’s philosophy is without a distinct system, it is not without order. He renounces any “ism” attached to his philosophy like Marcelianism or existentialism. In his Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen, Marcel

---

categorize them precisely. Kenneth Gallagher describes him as a, “relentlessly unsystematic thinker.” See Kenneth T. Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1962), ix. Seymour Cain comments that he “does not fit the usual picture of the philosopher.” See Seymour Cain, *Gabriel Marcel* (New York: Hillary House, 1963), 12. Teresa Reed remarks: “Marcel shares with us a philosophy that is non-systematic but profoundly synthetic, a philosophy well served by the essay form.” See Teresa Reed, “Aspects of Marcel’s Essays,” *Renascence* 55 (Spring 2003): 225. Also, Brendan Sweetman comments that Marcel construes that systematization is a misguided philosophical system. See Brendan Sweetman, *The Vision of Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, The Transcendent* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 7-22.

<sup>5</sup> Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel*, 71.

<sup>6</sup> Harold H. Titus, Marilyn S. Smith and Richard T. Nolan, *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1979), 333-334.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 60-61; Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:213.

<sup>8</sup> Clyde Pax, *An Existential Approach to God*, 2.



underlines very well that he is not interested to explain or expound a system. Rather, his aim is to remain honest to himself as he states:

my task . . . could not be that of expounding some system which might be described as Marcelianism—the word rings in my ears with a mocking parodic note!—but rather to recapitulate the body of my work under a fresh light, to seize on its joints, its hinges, its articulations, above all to indicate its general direction.<sup>9</sup>

Philosophy, for Marcel, starts with concrete experience.<sup>10</sup> He prefers to call his philosophy concrete philosophy or philosophy of existence. His philosophizing is a reflection on the concrete lived experience itself with a goal to re-establish the primacy of the existential which is indubitable and not based on logical certainty like that of Rene Descartes.<sup>11</sup> Not only that he understands his philosophy as existential but also phenomenological in holding that thinking must start with an act of attention to certain phenomena and allowing them to appear as fresh as they are without

---

<sup>9</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:3.

<sup>10</sup> Marcel was first influenced by the idealist philosophers such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854), F. H. Bradley (1846-1924), Josiah Royce (1855-1916), and William Ernest Hocking (1873-1966). But he became displeased of their approach to reality because of its possibility of all-inclusiveness system of philosophy and for its inability to give justice to the individual human person. See Clyde Pax, *An Existential Approach to God*, 2-3. Marcel affirms that human persons exist in the immediate concrete situation. Their being-in-the-world is undeniable. Existence in the concrete is based on certitude and on existential certainty not based on logical or rational demonstration. See Gabriel Marcel, *Man against Mass Society*, trans. G. Fraser (Chicago: Regnery, 1962 [Reprinted in 1985, University Press of America]), 1. See also Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal* (Chicago: Henry Regnelli Company, 1952), 316.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel comments that his philosophy is a battle against the spirit of abstraction, which is based on the *Cartesian Cogito*. Descartes holds that thinking is the essence of human existence and asserts that the mind and the body are separable. “In order to know the human mind, and its operations, it is not necessary to even know that I have a body.” See Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel*, 15-16. He treats the self as detached, disinterested, and universal ego. For Descartes, “the mind is simply encased in a body apprehending the world through *clear and distinct ideas*. The thinking self is not essentially related to a body and a world, and so it is possible to divorce our mental states, our concepts and beliefs, from the existence of everything else, including our own bodies.” See Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel*, 15-16. See Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 171. This dichotomy of mind and body where the latter becomes disinterested inevitably developed to subject-object distinction. That is to say, the “I” becomes alienated from the “body” and subsequently turns the latter to a mere entity.



manipulating them.<sup>12</sup> In this way, Marcel prefers to employ ordinary language and avoids philosophical jargons in order to reveal the basic structure of human experiences.<sup>13</sup> Thus, his style of writing is evident even in his first book, *Metaphysical Journal*, which has a diary format, and he maintains this style in his further writings.

As for Marcel, life and reflection is complimentary and inseparable. As T.M. Leeuwen in his book *The Surplus of Meaning* observes, to Marcel, “concrete reality . . . is precisely the soil on which reflection lives.”<sup>14</sup> Thus, the method of his philosophical reflection works “from life to thought and then down from thought to life again, so that [one] may try to throw more light upon life.”<sup>15</sup>

As philosophy seeks to discover, it demands participation. Unlike science which does not require personal involvement in its endeavor, philosophy is likened to art or poetry, which primarily demands personal involvement.<sup>16</sup> Philosophy as

---

<sup>12</sup> William Desmond, “Philosophy of Religion: Marcel, Jaspers, Levinas,” in Routledge, *History of Philosophy*, 110. Marcel’s phenomenology avoids the Husserlian school which leads to subjectivism and idealism. See James Collins, *The Existentialists* (Chicago : Henry Regnery Co., 1952), 137.

<sup>13</sup> “Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel,” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marcel/>, accessed: 10 February 2012. See also “Marcel, Gabriel,” New World Encyclopedia. Available from: [http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gabriel\\_Marcel](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gabriel_Marcel), accessed: 12 July 2010. Dennis Kinlaw, an Old Testament scholar and former Professor of Semitic Languages at Asbury Theological Seminary, agrees with Marcel when he argues that narrative presentation of the Gospel is not necessarily inferior to systematic or logical one. Thus, according to Kinlaw, the book of Romans, which is systematic or logical in nature, should not be seen as more theologically “persuasive” than the book of Mark, which is narrative in nature. He explains: “This bias colors our personal evangelism, our preaching, and every other way we attempt to present the gospel. We assume that, if we can force someone to follow the logic of redemption, that person must be saved. That’s the evangelism of power—and it’s not the way most people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Rational arguments have their place, of course; but the stories have a logical power that we dismiss too lightly.” See Dennis F. Kinlaw, *The Mind of Christ* (Anderson, Ind.: Francis Asbury Press, 1998), 52.

<sup>14</sup> T.M. Leeuwen, *The Surplus of Meaning: Ontology and Eschatology in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981), 18.

<sup>15</sup> Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 1:41.

<sup>16</sup> Gabriel Marcel, “What Can One Expect of Philosophy,” *Philosophy Today* 3 (Winter 1959): 252.



participation signifies an unceasing openness to reality. Philosophy as participation presupposes a vocation. It is a personal response to a call upon the inner urgent need.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the philosopher is called to respond to fundamental questions about the human condition and reality to find an answer for them through “illumination by the spiritual life which is truth.”<sup>18</sup>

Thus, to Marcel, “to be” is to participate in being. The concrete philosophy as Marcel’s starting point leads him to a concrete ontology that explores the multi-dimensions of life that is both physical and spiritual. In his reflection upon human persons, Marcel affirms that these multi-dimensional aspects of human life are not only physical but also spiritual. In recognizing the transcendent, he affirms that human persons are graced with the possibility of growth to the fullness of their being human. It is in and through intersubjective relationships, according to Marcel, that such deepening of being human is possible.

### The “Broken World”

The present world is a *broken world*<sup>19</sup> according to Marcel. It is broken in the sense that it loses the awareness of the *ontological* and dismisses the *transcendent*.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 3. See also Marcel, “What Can One Expect of Philosophy,” 252.

<sup>18</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:21. See also Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 18.

<sup>19</sup> In Marcel’s first lecture on the *Mystery of Being*, he qualifies his point that this broken state of the world is not merely historical but essential, a phenomenon that has always been there. He is consistent with biblical dogma of the Fall. At present, Marcel underscores, this “break” or “brokenness” in the world is much more obvious at present than before. Another qualification that Marcel made is he does not mean that the world is completely broken for there is still that desire and the need for fullness in human persons. See Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:34.

<sup>20</sup> Marcel digs deeper into the human persons’ problem which, according to him, depicts a universal characterization. Thus to him the “distinction between the *full* and the *empty* . . . [is] more fundamental than the distinction between the *one* and the *many*.” See Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1956), 12.



The broken world characterizes a world that is “divided” and “at war with itself,”<sup>21</sup> like a watch in which the battery is dead, it appears good and unchanged in the outside, but it has stopped functioning inside. Such is the present world, according to Marcel, whose heart has ceased to beat.

What brought about the brokenness of the present world, according to Marcel, is fundamentally linked to the *will to power*.<sup>22</sup> As the conception of the ultimate nature of reality, the will to power “asserts that the world and everything in it, including human beings, has a will or drive for power, a ‘monster of energy’ ‘and nothing else.’”<sup>23</sup> This is reflected, for instance, in people’s obsession with technology as an end in itself. Many fruits of technology are detrimental to humankind, for instance, weapons of mass destruction. Power tends to be the defining factor of relationships among many nations. The stronger attracts more supporters and allies mainly because of their desire for conquest and self-interests. But in rising to power to control the world and to shape themselves, they become *idolaters* of themselves.<sup>24</sup> Marcel acknowledges that the prerequisite of the “independence from” and “the denial of” the Creator stems from human persons’ desire to see themselves as the definer of their lives and reality.

Furthermore, the broken world characterizes that human persons are defined progressively by their functions.<sup>25</sup> Technology is conceived as the only mode of access to the truth. It has become the way of life. But this view of reality, according to Marcel, is misleading and detrimental for it only suppresses the undeniable and

---

<sup>21</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:23.

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche advanced this concept in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Marcel, *Man against Mass Society*, 62.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, 24.



fundamental need within human persons. He observes that many of the activities and problems of human persons are becoming more and more dependent on and shaped by technological manipulation and solutions. The increasing manipulation of technology has transformed society into a mechanistic one. Its bureaucratic effect in the government or social organizations has resulted in a functional system, so that those in power can manipulate others for their desired ends.<sup>26</sup> The consequence has been the objectification and depersonalization of human persons. That is to say, human persons are reduced to objects and measurable units. Documents, records, and titles tend to substitute persons. Human persons are reduced to the state of their functions and lose their sense of being human. In effect, Marcel says, “the idea of any real community becomes more and more inconceivable . . . The very idea of a close human relationship [or] intimate relationship is becoming increasingly hard to put into practice and is even being rather disparaged.”<sup>27</sup>

### Exigence of Being

Right at the heart of the human condition lies a deep hunger for fullness and value. Marcel calls this the *exigence of being*. Sometimes he describes *exigence* as *exigence of transcendence*, and as hope.<sup>28</sup> It is difficult, however, to find the equivalent word of the French word *exigence* in English language. In fact, the word

---

<sup>26</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:32.

<sup>27</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:28.

<sup>28</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:chapter 3. See also Sam Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel’s Thought,” in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 99-120. McCarthy points out that “the need for transcendence means a ‘going beyond’ ” according to a vertical spatial metaphor, but not in the sense of transcending experience entirely, for beyond all experience there is nothing. See McCarthy, “Marcel’s Absolute Thou,” 180.



“need,” as used by some interpreters of Marcel, does not convey its real meaning.<sup>29</sup> *Exigence of being* is not merely a wish or affirmation of the existence. Also, it is not reducible to someone’s psychological state, mood or attitude.<sup>30</sup> But rather *exigence* indicates “a deep-rooted interior urge and it might equally well be interpreted as an appeal.”<sup>31</sup> It signifies that something is not merely wanted but rather, demanded.<sup>32</sup> *Exigence*, thus, to use Sam Keen’s words, is “a movement of human spirit that is inseparable from being human.”<sup>33</sup> It is that desire to reach a “more meaningful and profound dimension of reality,” and that “aspiration to pure, rich, full, significant experience.”<sup>34</sup> While Marcel describes this urge for value and fullness as an appeal or a demand for the *here and now*, he claims that this *exigence* is also an “urge for that which is found only in eternity . . . that which transcends the world in its totality.”<sup>35</sup>

Briefly, the concept of *being*, from the philosophical outlook, refers to the realm where the whole of human persons are revealed. It is also a fundamental experience of the life of the spirit that opposes a universal conceptualization of reality<sup>36</sup>—a *problematic*, scientific outlook to reality.<sup>37</sup> Against the *Angst*, that feeling of deep anxiety, of the broken world, *exigence of being*, therefore, is that inner

---

<sup>29</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 2, *Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague, (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 37.

<sup>30</sup> Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel’s Thought,” 105.

<sup>31</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:17.

<sup>32</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:37.

<sup>33</sup> Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel’s Thought,” 105.

<sup>34</sup> Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel’s Thought,” 107.

<sup>35</sup> Anderson, “Notions of Being,” 40.

<sup>36</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, ed. Brendan Sweetman (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), 18. Existentialist philosophers such as Sartre, Heidegger, Tillich regarded being as the foundation of philosophy. Those in the empirical tradition, however, construe being as nonsensical. See Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel’s Thought,” 97.

<sup>37</sup> This is elaborated under the discussion of *problem* and *primary reflection* below.



appeal or demand that drives human persons to obtain the fullness of life. This human condition calls for the absolute necessity of philosophical research that involves a certain kind of reflection on being. As such, Marcel's philosophy affirms that *there is being* which stands in opposition to the nihilistic affirmation that "nothing is." He elaborates:

Being is that which does not frustrate our expectation; there is being from the moment at which our expectation is fulfilled—I mean the expectation in which we wholly participate. The doctrine that denies being can be expressed by the phrase: 'All is vanity', in other words that we must expect nothing, and only the man who expects nothing will avoid being disappointed. I believe that it is only on this basis that the problem can be stated. To say: 'Nothing is' is to say 'Nothing Matters.'<sup>38</sup>

Marcel's understanding of *being*, which to him has been suppressed and missing, is of special interest precisely because it concerns to both the existential, physical and the spiritual.<sup>39</sup> Marcel's approach to reality offers a profound and a penetrating insight on the recovery of being. He argues that the realm of the problematic and primary reflection cannot reach and do justice to the domain of *being*. Instead, the logical outworking of the problematic view of reality can lead human persons to disunity and despair. The realm of mystery and secondary reflection, however, transcends the former outlook to reality. It sheds light on the urgency of the *exigence of being*. It also allows human persons to have access to and participate in the domain of *being*.

---

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 179. See also Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, 49-50.

<sup>39</sup> The empirical tradition treats the idea of "being" as nonsensical. However, existential thinkers like Heidegger, Sartre, Tillich among others construe "being" as the foundation of philosophy. See Keen, "The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel's Thought," 99.



## Problem and Primary Reflection and Having

Marcel's distinction between a *problem* and *mystery* is one of his most important contributions to metaphysical thinking.<sup>40</sup> A *problem* is a "project that requires a solution."<sup>41</sup> In his book, *Being and Having*, Marcel says that a problem is "something that I meet, that I find complete before me, but for something that I can not therefore lay siege to and reduce."<sup>42</sup> That is, a problem is dualistic in nature producing a subject-object dichotomy. A problem is exterior to the subject, that is, the subject is detached from the object. The subject's identity does not matter at all in the context of the problematic. What matters most is the information or data at stake. Therefore, as a problem, that which is construed and reduced as an object, which is presented as a mathematical or mechanical or chemical, is therefore treated for scrutiny, analysis, and manipulation for a respective solution.<sup>43</sup>

According to Marcel, a solution to a particular problem requires an appropriate technique.<sup>44</sup> Techniques are procedures using a definite precision, capable of teaching and reproduction, in accomplishing a desired end.<sup>45</sup> Techniques provide physical and material comfort in the lives of people. However, Marcel observes that:

---

<sup>40</sup> J.V. Langmead Casserley, "Gabriel Marcel," in Carl Michalson, ed., *Christianity and the Existentialists* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 84.

<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Kathrine Farrer (Glasgow: The University Press, 1949), 117.

<sup>43</sup> The feature of problematic thinking is that it is open for verification by anyone. He affirms that the problematical realm provides an avenue by which human beings come together as a community to formulate and discuss problems, and to attempt at solutions to them. Marcel himself explains: "When I am dealing with a problem, I am trying to discover a solution that can become common property, that consequently can, at least in theory, be rediscovered by anybody at all. But . . . this idea of a validity for 'anybody at all' or of thinking in general has less and less application the more deeply one penetrates into the inner courts of philosophy; into, that is to say, that spiritual reality with which, in fact, our investigation has been concerned." See Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:213.

<sup>44</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 117.

<sup>45</sup> Marcel, *Man against Mass Society*, 82.



techniques used in business maneuvering and in the industrial workplace show themselves to be questionable, techniques appealed to in society and by individuals lead to detrimental results, and even more importantly techniques taking over the whole of the subject's endeavors lead to a displacing of the properly human aspirations.<sup>46</sup>

Furthermore, Marcel says, techniques as "systematized methods that enable man to subordinate nature, [are] considered as blind or even rebellious to his own ends."<sup>47</sup> In this way, technique, in its logical outworking consumes human persons—from possession, habit to enslavement, to idolatry, and worse, to worship of oneself.<sup>48</sup> Thus, technique, when misused, leads to degradation of life.

The problematic realm employs *primary reflection* as its epistemological method. Primary reflection characterizes a scientific method. It uses conceptual generalizations, abstractions, statistical and mathematical formulations, which are oriented to what is universal and verifiable.<sup>49</sup> This kind of critical reflection produces a dichotomy between the subject and the object. It disengages the subject from the fundamental object of experience. That is, inquirers can involve themselves with concepts but are void of experience. Marcel illustrates this dichotomy embodied by primary reflection in an example considering the body. He says that primary reflection construes the body as mere body with no special privileges for it only contains same properties like any other bodies.<sup>50</sup> Thus, as primary reflection breaks

---

<sup>46</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 36.

<sup>47</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 114.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel goes deep into his exposition of one's possible response to technique. To him the possible enslavement to technique is progressive. See Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, 83-84.

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 4. This outlook to reality is embodied in empirical or natural science, anatomy, physiology, and philosophical science and other connected disciplines.

<sup>50</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:92.



the unity between the human persons' body, *that this body is mine*, so to speak, in effect, a human persons' body is construed as mere "property" or "object."<sup>51</sup>

Marcel's notion of *having* illustrates a logical and a practical effect of the problematic outlook to reality when misemploy. According to Marcel, "all having defines itself somehow in terms of *my body*"<sup>52</sup> for the body acts as a bond or means to interrelate the subject to the world. *Having* means "being able to dispose of, having a power over."<sup>53</sup> That is, *having* entails a power to possess and manipulate. Also *having* sees the body as exterior and detached from the subject or the self and views it only as functional or instrumental. Thus, to say, "I have a body," that is, to view the body in the notion of *having*, means to regard the body as something that one *owns* like an object or data to be manipulated and disposed.

In *having*, human persons can have the unlimited possessions, ownerships, consumptions and the like. Thus, while primary reflection leads to the objectification of the body as mere property, *having* with its manipulative power allows the influence and exploitation upon that which is objectified. Marcel powerfully illustrates the realm of the problematic when taken as *the* only approach to reality by quoting the English scientist and philosopher Bertrand Russell:

'That man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his believes, are but *the outcome of accidental collocations of atom*; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath debris of a universe in

---

<sup>51</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:92.

<sup>52</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 82.

<sup>53</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 82. Thomas J. M. van Ewijk puts, "Within a problem I have data at my disposal that I work out." See Thomas J. M. van Ewijk, *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*, trans. Matthew J. van Velzen (New York: Paulist Press, 1965), 81.



ruins—all these things if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand.’<sup>54</sup>

In effect, the realm of the problematic, when using this concept as a worldview in order to measure human persons, sees them as products of accidental collocations of an atom. To grant this is to eradicate the sacredness and the dignity of life. For it denies the value and the intrinsic worth of human persons.

### Mystery and Secondary Reflection

The degrading effect of the *problematic* approach to reality necessitates the realm of *mystery* and *secondary reflection*. *Mystery* as an outlook to reality is contrary to a *problematic* outlook. It is where the dualistic approach to life, such as the subject-object, ceases. According to Marcel, *mystery* is “something in which I find myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as *a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity*.”<sup>55</sup> It is in this sense that Marcel paradoxically writes, “A mystery is a problem which encroaches upon its own data, invading them, as it were, and thereby transcending itself as a simple problem.”<sup>56</sup>

*Mysteries* are not subject to solution. Unlike the *problematic* realm that can only be addressed by technique, Marcel says, “mystery, by definition, transcends

---

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Marcel, *Being and Having*, 180. Emphasis mine. Further, in his article, “Ang Pilosopiya ng Buhay ni Gabriel Marcel,” a Filipino philosopher Manuel B. Dy argues: “Sa pag-aari ng ideya, maaari isa sa dalawang dulo ang ginagalawan ko: Tinatago ko ang mga ideya sa aking sarili, isang intelektuwal na pagkasuplado; o kaya pinapataw ko ang ideya ko sa iba, isang intelektuwal na dogmatism. Sa pag-aari naman ng tao, akin siya, hawak ko siya, inaalipin ko siya para sa aking sariling pakinabang o pagnanasa. Sa pag-aari ng relihiyon, inaangkin ko ang aking relihiyon at hawak ko ang susi ng kaligtasan.” See Manuel B. Dy Jr., “Ang Pilosopiya ng Buhay ni Gabriel Marcel, Hango sa Kanyang Pag-uusap Kay Paul Ricoeur,” *Karunungan* 6 (1989): 40. That means, one can use one’s idea or intellectual pride for self-interest and advantage to manipulate others. One can see others as one’s property or slave for one’s own desire and enjoyment. In relation to religion, one can claim to be the way to salvation.

<sup>55</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 117.

<sup>56</sup> Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, 19.



every conceivable technique.”<sup>57</sup> He synonymously calls *mystery* as the realm of the *metaproblematic*, which means beyond definition.<sup>58</sup> Also, *mystery* is irreducible to concepts or a problem that requires scientific technique. Robert Rosthal, in his introduction to *Creative Fidelity* points out that metaproblematic is in opposition to the problematic: “*mystery is something which while insoluble in principle, is yet not senseless*. It is an aspect of our experience which is inexpressible, hence inaccessible to communicable knowledge. But it can still be spoken of in a *suggestive* if not in an informative way.”<sup>59</sup>

In *mystery*, human persons are involved or engaged. Their identity matters and they are irreducible to mere data. Thus, *mystery* seeks the unity of the whole person. This recovery of the whole person is realizable through secondary reflection, a philosophical reflection that goes beyond the realm of primary reflection. It begins by being critical upon the first reflection—on the ordinary conceptual thinking.<sup>60</sup> It aims to “restore the concrete beyond the disconnected and discontinuous determinations of abstract thought,”<sup>61</sup> according to Marcel. It recovers, recuperates, reconciles, and synthesizes a previously isolated and analyzed experience.<sup>62</sup> Secondary reflection “culminates in a realization, or discovery, of the realm of mystery, and motivates human actions appropriate to this realm.”<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 117.

<sup>58</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. with an introduction by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964), xxiv.

<sup>59</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, xxvi.

<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 5.

<sup>61</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 22.

<sup>62</sup> See Ramon Vicente Sunico, “Reading Marcel: 3 Easy Pieces for Beginners” in Manuel B. Dy, Jr. *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986), 64.

<sup>63</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 6.



### Mystery Reveals the Realm of *Being*

As alluded to above, the question about *being* cannot be approached problematically because it is beyond the realm of problem. It is only in the realm of mystery where being is revealed. *Being*, as opposed to having, affirms that there is an aspect of life that goes beyond the material and the natural. Human persons are not only material, but also spiritual. Through the realm of *being*, Marcel shows that the spiritual is recognizable in the physical, the eternal in the empirical, or the Absolute Thou, God, in the concrete human experience. Accordingly, Marcel sees the need of the former in the latter if life is meant to be meaningful. It is in recognizing the spiritual dimension that human persons are guided to the experience of the fullness of *being*. In *being*, the intrinsic worth and value of human persons and the significance of intersubjective relations are affirmed. Thus, a closer look on the nature of *being* of Marcel sheds light on the above point.

Briefly, Marcel identifies three kinds of *being*, namely: (1) the world of natural objects; (2) subjects and their intersubjective relation with others; and (3) the Absolute Thou or God. These levels of *being* are interconnected and they form his ontology of participation: incarnation, communion or intersubjectivity and transcendence. Two of his books, *Mysteries of Being II* and *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, present a comprehensive discussion on the notions of *being* that are manifested in three levels. First, *being* is the foundation that grounds particular beings and experiences; second, *being* is the absolute plenitude that fulfills the ontological *exigence* or the *exigence of being*; and third, *being* as stated as “a being” that casts light on the mysterious connection between the first and the second.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, chapter 4: “The Questioning of Being.”



*Being* as a foundation or ground has two related but different meanings. *Being* is the ground and the bond or unity of all *beings* wherein they participate. *Being* here is taken as a “verb, the fact or act of being, the “is” if whatever is.”<sup>65</sup> That is to say, every thing or particular is a *being* as it is founded in and on being itself.<sup>66</sup> The verb “to be” stands as a basic affirmation for it is always attached to *being*, for instance, he or she *is*, I *am*, it *is* and the like. Thus, in the most fundamental sense, every particular being (anything that exists) participates in *being* for it to *be* or to exist.<sup>67</sup> That is to say, to deny *being* as foundation in this sense, as the fact, or act of *being*, is to declare that nothing is conceivable and nothing exists.<sup>68</sup> When *being* (as foundation) is put in human context, that is, being-in-the-world, it is called existence<sup>69</sup> or incarnate being. Thus, existing *being* or incarnate *being* implies that subjects or human persons are manifested in the world through their bodies.<sup>70</sup> The second meaning of *being* under “being as foundation” is “being” as the ground of intersubjective relations between beings. Here Marcel speaks of an intersubjective nexus, an underlying unity that grounds all interpersonal relations.<sup>71</sup> This is a given state of participation in human persons, that in the very structure of their being, they are not isolated but *beings-with-*

---

<sup>65</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's The Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 188. See also “Gabriel Marcel’s Notions of Being,” *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 32.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notions of Being,” 32.

<sup>67</sup> Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's The Mystery of Being*, 188.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, 50-51, 62; see also Marcel, *Being and Having*, 28-29.

<sup>69</sup> Marcel defines existence as something that can “only be sensed.” See Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 269. See also *Mystery of Being*, 2:25-26.

<sup>70</sup> Marcel’s response to the abstraction of Descartes is his notion of incarnation. He writes, “It might be better, indeed, instead of saying, ‘I exist,’ to say ‘I am’ manifest.’ The Latin prefix *ex-*—meaning out, outwards, out from—in “exist” has the greatest importance. I exist—that is as much as to say: I have something to make myself known and recognized both by others and by myself . . .” See *Mystery of Being*, 1:111-112; see also *Creative Fidelity*, 17.

<sup>71</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:11-17, 191.



others or co-present. This kind of participation is a submerged participation. It is not by free choice that one exists with other incarnate beings.<sup>72</sup> For this reason, as Anderson stresses, one “cannot cease to be grounded in participation in being with beings.”<sup>73</sup>

The second meaning of being as plenitude or “fullness” stands in opposition to the experience of emptiness in the broken world that denies the inherent value and worth of human persons.<sup>74</sup> Being as fullness fulfills the *exigence of being* discussed earlier. It affirms that life is endowed with meaning in intersubjectivity. Marcel describes the community where human persons open themselves to each other and recognize that each one is of great value, and they are one in the pursuit of truth.<sup>75</sup> It reflects a true encounter or meeting with other persons. Since objectification ceases in this community, each individual is revealed as a person. The encounter of the other person is perceived not only of equality but also of mutuality. That is to say, the meeting involves a subject-to-subject or person-to-person encounter, which transcends any form of objectification. It is in this context of speaking of the intersubjective communion that Marcel says, “between myself and the other, something is built up which transcends any relationship properly so called, a super-relationship which it is not in my power to transform into a sort of ideal object to manipulate intellectually, as one manipulates a formula.”<sup>76</sup>

In several places, Marcel points to the consummation of this community, the supra-personal unity which is beyond the temporal world, that is, in another world

---

<sup>72</sup> The concept of incarnate being which is fundamental in understanding Marcel’s notion of intersubjectivity is discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>73</sup> Anderson, “Notions of Being,” 39.

<sup>74</sup> See Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, 12.

<sup>75</sup> Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel’s The Mystery of Being*, 188.

<sup>76</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 274.



where value and fullness of *being* is complete.<sup>77</sup> Marcel also designates *being* as absolute super-being, and “the most genuine being”<sup>78</sup> and *being* par excellence. Marcel identifies this being as God.<sup>79</sup> In *Mystery of Being II*, he calls the *exigence of being* the *exigence* of God—“simply the *exigence* of transcendence disclosing its true face.”<sup>80</sup>

The third meaning of *being* bridges the relation between *being* as foundation and *being* as plenitude. To do this, Marcel reflects on the individual person, “a being”; for to him, “The more we are able to know the individual being the more we shall be oriented, as it were directly towards, a grasp of being as such.”<sup>81</sup> In his designation, “a being” Marcel wants to show that human persons are irreducible to the level of objects, functions, and ideas. As human persons are grounded in *being*, they are given an inherent and eternal value that does not stop at death. Such is a motivation to exhibit love, respect, commitment, fidelity, and trust. These values embodied in an experience of a community are meant to be eternal. They posit a being *par excellence*, an absolute *Being* or God, if they are to be meaningful and not fleeting. Thus, “a being,” depicts the manifestation of God, the Absolute Thou in human persons who primordially participate towards their fullness of *being*.

### *Disponibilité* and *Indisponibilité* as Open Possibilities

The question of *being* inextricably deals with human persons’ engagement in *being*. But human persons are left with choices whether to open up themselves to this

---

<sup>77</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 182-183; see also *Mystery of Being*, 2:66-69, 176; *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, 142, 212; *Homo Viator*, 153-154.

<sup>78</sup> Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, 53.

<sup>79</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:190. See also *Being and Having*, 169.

<sup>80</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:3.

<sup>81</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 47-48.



commitment or to be closed. Marcel's notion of *disponibilité* and its opposite *indisponibilité* are important here. These French terms *disponibilité* and *indisponibilité* were translated in English as availability and unavailability<sup>82</sup> *Indisponibilité* means closing oneself from others. It is a "hardening of the categories in accordance with which we conceive and evaluate the world."<sup>83</sup> *Indisponibilité* is the realm of the problematic operated in primary reflection. It is where a body-subject or subject-object relationship is properly conceived. It is also where individuals are engrossed in *having* and lose their sense of being human – paving the objectification and alienation of others because they are merely regarded as objects that are subject for some kind of solution.

*Disponibilité*, Brendan Sweetman stresses, is "meant to convey the idea of a kind of 'spiritual availability' which we should adopt toward other human beings."<sup>84</sup> It transcends one's being egocentric or being obsessed with one's own interest. It is being open and humble with other persons.<sup>85</sup> Henry G. Bugbee, another interpreter of Marcel, puts it this way, "We are (1) reflexively ordained (2) unto beings in a (3) consequent grasp of mutuality of being; therefore the force of *einai* ("to be") is found in to-be-shared-in-with."<sup>86</sup> That is to say, *disponibilité* is openness to the realm of the mystery of *being*. It is a heartfelt recognition of the presence of the Transcendent in

---

<sup>82</sup> Marcel suggests that "handiness" and "unhandiness" express the idea better. See Marcel, *Mystery of Being* 1:163. However, Marcel's translator, and interpreters and commentators from the secondary sources used in this study chose to use availability and unavailability as they best translate in English what Marcel wanted to convey. The researcher used availability and unavailability in this study.

<sup>83</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 6.

<sup>85</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 6-7.

<sup>86</sup> Henry G. Bugbee, "L'Exigence Ontologique," Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 84.



human life—the source of individual value and the sense of fullness and meaning found in interpersonal relationships.

### Conclusion

The existential ontology of Marcel concerns about the understanding of *being* as *mystery*, not a *problem* because *being* cannot be solved nor can be reached through the objectifying grip of primary reflection. Hence, *being* as *mystery* but requires one's personal involvement. *Being* as *mystery* reveals the human persons as a whole, their *exigence of being*, intrinsic need for fullness, and their directedness toward the Absolute Reality, God. Marcel's recovery of *being* over *thought* affirms that life is meaningful and purposeful. It is that *mystery of being* where life finds fulfillment and ultimate significance are the profound insights that Marcel's philosophy offers.



## CHAPTER 5

### INTERSUBJECTIVITY

“There is only one suffering: to be alone,”<sup>1</sup> says Rose, the main character in Gabriel Marcel’s play *Le Coeur des austres*. The anguish comes out of the experience of alienation that inevitably implies a hunger for relationship. Marcel asserts that human persons are capable of relationship as they are essentially relational beings.

Through Marcel’s concept of incarnation he establishes that human persons are not isolated objects but rather they fundamentally exist in relationship. This posits that inward experience of communion with others is real, and it can grow and last through free acts of mutual openness and love, fidelity, and hope. In this chapter, the researcher explores the fundamentals of intersubjectivity starting at Marcel’s notion of incarnation, then continuing on to its core pillars: love, fidelity, and hope.

#### Incarnation as Basic Intersubjectivity

Marcel’s notion of incarnation, his original and significant contribution to philosophy, is at the heart of his metaphysical quest. It is through incarnation that Marcel attempts to debunk or de-Cartesianize philosophy which is built upon the *cogito*.<sup>2</sup> Briefly, as alluded in Chapter Four above, Rene Descartes’ dichotomy between the mind and the body, in which he holds that thinking is the essence of

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Kurt Frank Reinhardt, *The Existentialist Revolt: The Main Theories and Phases of Existentialism* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952), 203.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Busch, “Gabriel Marcel: An Overview and Assessment,” *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 5. The doctrine of incarnation “lies at the very center of metaphysical quest.” See Erwin W. Straus and Michael A. Machado, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notion of Incarnate Being,” in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 123.



existence, has resulted in a subject-object distinction. That is to say, the body, which is considered as a detached property from the self, "I", is regarded as an object. As such, objectivity overcomes subjectivity, the personal side of human persons.

In incarnation, Marcel re-establishes the primacy of existence that is indubitable and that is not based on logical certainty like that of Descartes.<sup>3</sup> Marcel's counterpoint to the "I think" of Descartes is his assertion "I exist." He maintains that "this centrality of significant existence . . . is simply, of course, myself, in so far as I feel sure that I exist."<sup>4</sup> The affirmation "I exist" testifies that existence is inseparable from the ones who affirm their existence, human persons themselves, for existence itself is one's own essential quality. Hence any attempt to falsify existence is in turn a denial of oneself. As such, existence can never be a predicate (or an object) for it cannot be detached from the self, "I."<sup>5</sup> That is to say, the "I" can never be isolated, but rather only manifested in the world. Thus, as Marcel puts it, to say " 'I exist' [is] to say, 'I am' manifest."<sup>6</sup> "That is as much as to say," he adds, "I have something to make myself known and recognized both by others and by myself."<sup>7</sup> According to Marcel, this inseparability of the "I" and existence reflects a unity that is indissoluble. He concludes, "If therefore, 'the I exist' can be taken as an indubitable touchstone of existence, it is on condition that it is treated as an indissoluble unity: the 'I' cannot be

---

<sup>3</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. R. Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Straus 1964), 15 and 11-37. See also Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Kathrine Farrer (Glasgow: The University Press, 1949), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 1, *Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 88.

<sup>5</sup> Marcel affirms Immanuel Kant's argument that existence is not a predicate, as it does not change the quality of something. See Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:90.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:90-91.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:91.



considered apart from the 'exist.'<sup>8</sup>

Marcel's assertion of the indissoluble unity of the "I," self and existence establishes the relation between the self and the body. Through incarnation, Marcel defies Descartes' dichotomy between the self and the body, the subject-object distinction.<sup>9</sup> What Descartes was disinterested in, the body is inferior, is Marcel's tool to discount Descartes. Marcel asserts, "to be incarnated is to appear to oneself as a body without being identified with nor distinguished from it."<sup>10</sup> He further explicates, "my body is *my* body just in so far as I do *not* consider it in this detached fashion, do not put a gap between myself and it. To put this in another way, my body is mine in so far as for me my body is not an object but, rather, I *am* my body."<sup>11</sup> Marcel further clarifies, "To say I *am* my body is to negate, to deny, to erase that gap which . . . I would be postulating as soon as I asserted that my body was merely my instrument."<sup>12</sup> Thus, because the body transcends the characterization of an object, for it is a part of the self (me), Marcel asserts, "to bring in the idea of the body not as an object but as a *subject*."<sup>13</sup> Thus, to Marcel, the relation between the self and the body is not a subject-object but a subject-subject relationship, without a distance and separation, which strongly suggests, as Straus and Machado express, an indecomposable unity between

---

<sup>8</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:90.

<sup>9</sup> The dualism of Descartes represents the realm of the problematic and primary reflection. According to Anderson, Marcel does not totally dismiss primary reflection as incorrect as alluded in Chapter Four above.

<sup>10</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 19-20.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:100. See also Gabriel Marcel, *Presence and Immortality*, trans. Michael A. Machado (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 1967), 234. See also Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being, Vol. 2, Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague, (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 29. Marcel's assertion of "I am my body" indicates that the body goes beyond the conception of merely an instrument because it is of value and worth.

<sup>12</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:100. See also Marcel, *Being and Having*, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:101. Italics added.



the self and the body.<sup>14</sup> This understanding extols the body as a fundamentally mysterious type of reality.<sup>15</sup>

### Sensation as Participation

Human persons are not only manifested in the world but also fundamentally participating with others. Marcel strengthens his case of the body as the nexus of existence through something that the body itself characterizes. That is sensation. At the outset he defines what is *not* sensation by saying that it is not emission and transmission of messages or data. Sensation is not perception because it is not as a machine that receives data from the outside through the process of translation. Marcel stresses, “the essence of the physical event as such, considered as the basis of sensation is that it is not and cannot be given to the consciousness which purportedly translates it into sensation.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, sensation transcends the mechanical ways of communication.

Sensation goes beyond perception of things or objects. It entails action and feeling. It involves action because sensation is an immediate experience with the world. It also involves feeling because experience is qualitative and substantial in nature. Gerber puts it well, “to sense is to exist in union with otherness. Sensation fundamentally is the feeling of being opened to what is not oneself.”<sup>17</sup> In that way, feeling grounds conjunction and association. Marcel writes, “sensation is immediate,

---

<sup>14</sup> Straus and Machado, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notion of Incarnate Being,” 130.

<sup>15</sup> Rudolph J. Gerber, “Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics,” *Philosophy Today* 12 (Winter 1968): 272. Italics added. To assert the self is inextricably to assert the body for they, the self and body, are not detached but seen as intimacy. Sweetman also adds, “The self and the body are in a *mysterious unity*, which is not explicable by means of the traditional idea that the body is an instrument of, or a possession of, the self.” See Brendan Sweetman, *The Vision of Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, The Transcendent* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 26.

<sup>17</sup> Gerber, “Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics,” 272.



the basis of all interpretation and communication, hence not itself an interpretation or communication.”<sup>18</sup> Just as there is no such a thing as interpretation or communication in itself, sensation as feeling is always seen in the context of relationship. As Marcel stresses, “to feel is not to receive but to *participate* immediately.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, the body as the foundation of feeling and sensation establishes that human persons manifest and participate in the world. This is the fundamental situation of human persons attested by the body and sensation. Thus, existence always presupposes involvement for to exist is to participate. As Eugene Thomas Long says, “to be is to be in the world, involved in a situation.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus, incarnation sets forth the intersubjective bond of human persons in which they themselves are immersed. This is Marcel’s “we reality”—the new metaphysics of “we are” as opposed to Cartesian metaphysics of “I think.”<sup>21</sup> This is a given reality. It is the first level of participation—the first intersubjectivity. It is basic in the human persons’ existence that they are already “we are,” that is, they are already engaged in, even before thinking about it.<sup>22</sup> As Straus and Machado put it,

---

<sup>18</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal* (Chicago: Henry Regnelli Company, 1952), 258. Italics added.

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Thomas Long, *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900-2000* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 321.

<sup>21</sup> The metaphysics of “we are” is the starting of philosophy in Marcel. It is in this new metaphysics of the “we are” that Marcel takes ontology as its root and starting point where person stands in vital relation with others. Marcel writes, “I have laid such stress on intersubjectivity precisely because I wish to emphasize the presence of an underlying reality that is *felt*, a community deeply rooted in ontology, without which human relations would be unintelligible.” See Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 2:9, 19. From this emerges the basic truth that intersubjectivity is foundational to epistemology, ethics and love. It is only by being with others that knowledge and understanding, love, and responsibility are possible. The very act and experience of communication, inquiry, sharing thought and affection, obedience and the like presuppose a basic community of human persons. See Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 138; *Mystery of Being* 2:9-13; and W.E. Hocking, “Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1954): 439-69.

<sup>22</sup> See Anderson, “Notions of Being,” 33-37. This given status to human persons as participant beings in the world is what Marcel calls “submerge participation.” See also Marcel, *Mystery of Being*,



“before the I can emerge as a fully conscious subject, before a communion can flower between an I and a Thou, there is already a community of beings bound together by an intersubjective nexus which is the body.”<sup>23</sup> As such, one’s subjectivity embodies intersubjectivity.

Thus, Marcel’s incarnation shows that human persons are bound to space and time. They are not objects, units or machine, but subjects or persons, and they are not isolated or alienated but basically manifested in a concrete situation in the world *with* others living and participating in an encompassing existence of togetherness in community that is felt. Thus, the concept of incarnation of Marcel posits that intersubjectivity is at the heart of human existence. The very nature of human persons reflects an open and welcoming door to others. This foundational nature of human persons postulates that deeper experiences such as love, fidelity, commitment, and trust are possible and real among human persons. That realm which Marcel establishes through his incarnation is intersubjectivity or I-Thou relationship, the second level of ontological participation in Marcel, where relationship takes place from a free response in a personal encounter. It is to this realm of the I-Thou relationship that the following discussion will now turn.

### **Intersubjectivity: Love**

According to Marcel, life is essentially *co-esse*, with others, for to him, “*esse est co-esse*,” to exist is basically to exist with others. Marcel asserts that human persons are essentially given to each other as each presupposes the other. He explains:

Not only do we have a right to assert that others exist, but I should be inclined to contend that existence can be attributed only to others, and in virtue of their otherness, and that I cannot think of myself as existing except in so far as I

---

1:140. Through his “we reality”, Marcel goes deeper and encompassing than Martin Buber’s “I and Thou” as the former grounds the latter.

<sup>23</sup> Straus and Machado, “Gabriel Marcel’s Notion of Incarnate Being,” 136.



conceive of myself as not being the others: and so as other than them. I would go so far as to say that it is of the Other that he exists. I cannot think of him as other without thinking of him as existing.<sup>24</sup>

In this way, to Marcel, intersubjectivity is even fundamental to epistemology, so, understanding of oneself takes place only by starting with others and only from them. Thus, the proper understanding of human persons, Marcel's maintains, is using a heterocentric perspective and not a heauto-centric.<sup>25</sup> This, to him, is an antidote to egocentrism. According to Marcel, even the love of oneself is grounded in the recognition of other persons. He elaborates:

. . . it is only in this [hetero-centric] perspective that a legitimate love of self can be conceived. Fundamentally, I have no reason to set any particular store by myself except in so far as I know that I am loved by other beings who are loved by me. Love of self can have a true foundation only by using others as medium, and that medium is our only safeguard against egocentrism and our only assurance that it will have the character of lucidity which otherwise it inevitably loses."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, at the outset, it is in hetero-centric perspective that intersubjectivity should be approached.

### Intersubjectivity as Mutual Openness

Intersubjectivity, according to Marcel, is basically a mutual openness between human persons who are bound together as one "at the ontological level, that is *qua* beings."<sup>27</sup> In *Man Against Mass Society*, he writes, "The very notion of intersubjectivity on which all my own most recent work has been based presupposes a *reciprocal openness* between individuals without which no kind of spirituality is

---

<sup>24</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 104.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:8.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:9.

<sup>27</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:178, 181.



conceivable.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, in *Mystery of Being II*, he stresses that outside intersubjectivity it is “impossible to be open to others, to welcome him in the deepest sense of the word, and to become at the same time more accessible to oneself.”<sup>29</sup>

Marcel elucidates more clearly this notion of intersubjectivity in the I-thou<sup>30</sup> relationship against its anti-thesis, the I-him/she/it relationship. The I-thou relationship goes beyond I-he/she/it relationship, the realm of impersonal or objective or problematic. I-thou relationship is properly conceived in the realm of mystery in which human persons are personally involved. For this reason, intersubjectivity can only be consciously lived out.

#### I-Thou Relation and I-he/she/it Relation Contrasted

To Marcel, a thou or you, the second person pronoun in the English language, always signifies something concrete and personal. In French, the thou as *Vous*, as Anderson explains, indicates that “intersubjectivity is an intimate union of two subjects, not a subject-object relation.”<sup>31</sup> A thou transcends any form of objective characterization in which human persons are regarded as impersonal, concepts, figures, functions or entities.<sup>32</sup> As Marcel asserts, “insofar as he is a *thou*, he is freed from the nature of things, and nothing I can say about things can concern him.”<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, trans. by G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), 267. Italics added. See also Marcel, *Presence and Immortality*, 239.

<sup>29</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:10.

<sup>30</sup> Intersubjectivity and I-thou relation are synonymous terms. However, Marcel uses the former as more comprehensive term than the latter. The researcher uses these terms interchangeably.

<sup>31</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 79.

<sup>32</sup> This objective characterization of individuals or depersonalization is seen in the many situations in the present society. In many social transactions like banking, filling out questionnaires, buying things in the supermarkets and the like. What tends to be more important in these settings is all *about* the individuals and rarely persons themselves.

<sup>33</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:154.



Thus, a *thou* is essentially that which “I can invoke rather than that which I judge to be capable of answering me,”<sup>34</sup> according to Marcel. In other words, the *thou* is someone who can respond and be engaged with one’s whole being. To Marcel, love is central in understanding the *thou*. This will be shown shortly.

As already pointed out, in Marcel, the third person singular he/she/it is in the category of objects. But, in what sense is the third person in the category of object (it)? Marcel’s answer is, “When I consider another individual as “he,” I treat him as essentially absent; it is his absence which allows me to objectify him, to reason about him as though he were a nature or given essence.”<sup>35</sup> To Marcel, the third person he/she refers to an object of thought or judgment or observation. The he/she indicates merely collections of information or data (his or her backgrounds, functions, traits, skills, race and the like). In that way, a he/she becomes impersonal. Furthermore, the third person characterizes absence in the linguistic sense. The person referred as he/she is absent or detached from the “me,” I, in a dialogue, for instance. In other words, I-he/she for Marcel depicts two persons that are stranger to each other. The he/she has the subject-object relationship, by virtue of the distancing and detachment that it engenders.

### I-thou Relationship

The I-thou relationship and I-he/she/it relationship shall become clearer through an example Marcel himself employs. In the illustration given below, he describes the I-he/she/it relationship wherein there is a presence that is a mode of absence because one could be present to somebody yet act as if he or she is absent:

---

<sup>34</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 200.

<sup>35</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 32-33. See also Marcel, “Theism and Personal Relationships,” *Cross Currents* 1 (1950-51): 37.



I meet someone I don't know on the train; we talk about the weather, the war, but even though I am addressing him, he continues to be "someone," "that man there;" he is in the fullest sense a Mr. so-and-so, the particulars of whose biography I get to know bit by bit. It is as though he were filling out a questionnaire, as if he were providing me with fragments of an account with which he identified himself. It can also be imagined that you are confronting some employee who asks you to state your identity. The remarkable fact, however, is that the more my questioner is external to me, the more I am by the same token external to myself; in confronting a Mr. so-and-so I also become another Mr. so-and-so, unless I literally happen not to be a person anymore—a pen which traces words on paper or a simple recording apparatus  
 ...<sup>36</sup>

The I-he/she/it relationship shows an encounter between two persons wherein one is only treated *about* who he or she is. The personal is set aside and replaced by facts, functions and information. The encounter is external for there is no direct and mutual penetration between the I and the other. In the end, the other only remains as an automated machine that is capable only of providing information. In another occasion, Marcel depicts the I-he/she/it relationship as "poverty which is neither lack of money nor lack of success and which we are told is going to spread like leprosy."<sup>37</sup> In other words, the realm of I-he/she/it relationship is the lack of love for, according to Marcel, it shows "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."<sup>38</sup> Marcel's analysis of I-he/she/it relationship concurs with the biblical understanding of sin.<sup>39</sup> In the final analysis, the I-he/she/it relationship is the perversion of a genuine relationship, the I-thou.

---

<sup>36</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 147. Also quoted in *Creative Fidelity*, 33.

<sup>37</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 122-123.

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*, 122-123.

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 3 depicts a graphic picture of sin. Rob L. Staples, a Church of the Nazarene theologian, discusses seven qualities of sin based on Genesis 3: first, sin begins in a questioning of divine authority (Gen. 3:1; Rom. 1:25); second, sin is essentially an attempt to be like God (Gen. 3:5, 22); third, sin is social; fourth, sin involves breaking of fellowship; fifth, sin is a denial of responsibility (Gen. 2:25; 3:7, 8); sixth, sin robs life of meaning and purpose; and seventh, sin is a result of separation



The I-thou relation, however, depicts an encounter wherein there is real, direct, and mutual penetration between two persons. They are both soaked into a moving experience, not only externally but most importantly, internally, as they are open to each other. Marcel describes:

It can happen, however, that a bond of feeling can be created between me and the other person, if, for example, I discover an experience we have both shared (we have both been to a certain place, have run the same risks, have criticized a certain individual, or read and loved the same book); hence a unity is established in which the other person and myself become *we*, and this means that he ceases to be *him* and becomes *thou*; the words “you too” in this context take on primary value. Literally speaking, we communicate; and this means that the other person ceases to be for me someone with whom I converse, he ceases to intervene between me and myself; this self with whom I had coalesced in order to observe and judge him, while yet remaining separate, has fused into the living unity he now forms with me. The path leading from dialectic to love has now been opened.

The being whom I love can hardly be a third person for me at all; yet he allows me to discover myself; my outer defenses fall at the same time as the walls separating me from the other person fall. He moves more and more into the circle with reference to which and outside of which there exist third persons who are the “others.”<sup>40</sup>

Because there is openness between the two persons, each one is treated not merely as *what* he or she is, but as *who* he or she is, the wall of division between the two persons crashes down and mutual penetration begins. The he/she ceases to be him/her. The he or she now becomes a thou because the abyss has been bridged so that a “you too” experience comes to light. There is now a bond of feeling that emerges from the experience they both cherish. This union or oneness makes possible

---

from God (1 Cor. 15:22). See Rob L. Staples, *Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms* (Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 2001), 43-44. Also, in his analysis of sin on Genesis 3, Kinlaw succinctly says, “Satan disguises submission to himself under the ruse of personal autonomy. He never asks us to become his servants . . . The shift in the commitment is never from Christ to evil; it is always from Christ to self. And instead of his will, self interest now rules and what I want reigns. And that is the essence of sin.” See Kinlaw, “Subtle calls to Sin,” in *This Day with the Master: 365 Daily Meditation*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. November 14. Like Marcel, John Wesley describes sin as the disease of human soul or “loathsome leprosy.” See John Wesley, Sermon 21, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount Discourse I,” 166; Sermon 14, “Repentance of Believers,” 112; Sermon 66, “The Signs of Time,” 512, in *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.).

<sup>40</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 33-34.



for the “we” to emerge. Thus, a community is born, togetherness that embodies a free response for the other. That mutual openness which human persons give birth to union or oneness is to Marcel an act of love. Hence, if there is one word through which intersubjectivity could be attained, that is love,<sup>41</sup> for in the final analysis, according to Marcel, “intersubjectivity . . . is after all nothing but charity itself.”<sup>42</sup>

### Freedom and Disponibilité

To Marcel, the freest persons are those who live in the I-thou relation. As long as human persons are free they always face polarity of tendencies—they can conceive others either as objects or subjects (persons), or mere possessions or beings. However, to Marcel, true freedom emerges from collaboration with others. He explains:

If I treat the Thou as He, I reduce the other to being only nature; an animated object which works in some ways and not in other others. If, on the contrary, I treat the other as Thou, I treat him and apprehend him qua freedom. I apprehend him qua freedom because he is also freedom, and is not only nature. What is more, I help him, in a sense, to be freed, I collaborate with his freedom. The formula sounds paradoxical and self-contradictory, but love is always proving it true.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, to treat other persons as freedom is to see them as thous with the capacity to open their whole being to others. The thous are the *disponibilité*, available persons (alluded to in Chapter Four). The available persons are open to be present for others and allow themselves to be penetrated. They transcend the attitude of the *indisponibilité*, unavailable persons who are deliberately locked into themselves and form a hard shell round them so that they are incapable of breaking through.<sup>44</sup> The

---

<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 200. See also *Mystery of Being*, 2:67.

<sup>42</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:170.

<sup>43</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 106-107.

<sup>44</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:163. According to Marcel “unavailability is invariably rooted in some measure of alienation.” See Gabriel Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, ed. Brendan Sweetman (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011), 42.



unavailable persons are not free for they are prisoners of themselves as they are obsessed by their own affairs. In the final analysis, according to Marcel, “a concrete analysis of unavailability is no less necessary for our purpose than that of betrayal, denial of despair.”<sup>45</sup> The available persons are ready and willing to lay down their lives to others even to the point of death. That is why, according to Marcel, the pinnacle point of *disponibilité* is sacrifice, the giving of oneself for a greater cause.<sup>46</sup> Thus, real freedom is being available for others without any condition. To Marcel, the more human persons are available for others, the more they become free. Both freedom and *disponibilité* are inseparable and find value in community of love. Hence, to Marcel love essentially demands unconditionality. As he states, “Love, in the fullest and most concrete sense of the word, namely, the love of one being for another, seems to rest on the unconditional: *I shall continue to love you no matter what.*”<sup>47</sup>

### One, But not Losing Oneself

Obviously, in the I-thou relationship, there are categories of sameness and otherness as there are two unique beings involved. According to Marcel, the categories are transcended, for there is “indistinctness of the I and thou”<sup>48</sup> and this affirms their union. Such union, however, does not mean losing or dissolving or eradicating oneself. Rather, in this indistinctness of the I and the thou there is strength. As Marcel says, “it is a kind of vital milieu for the soul from which the soul

---

<sup>45</sup> Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 77. Marcel differentiates suicide from sacrifice. Suicide to him is “essentially a refusal; it is a resignation. Sacrifice is essentially attachment.”

<sup>47</sup> Marcel, *Existential Background of Human Dignity*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 35.



draws its strength and where it is renewed by testing itself.”<sup>49</sup> Thomas Anderson’s comment is worthy of our attention here:

. . . subjects joined together in intersubjective relations do not fuse into one and the same being, nor on the other hand do they remain totally separate to each other as “two nuclei quite distinct from each other.” They are truly united in a “suprapersonal unity,” yet the integrity of each person is not obliterated in their unity but enhanced, for their relationship is “fructifying” and a “vital milieu” from which each subject “draws its strength,” Marcel states. Experience confirms what he says for I do feel strengthened and enhanced by my intersubjective union with others whether it be simply working together in a common project or the most intimate form of love.<sup>50</sup>

At its core, the transformation from I-he/she/it relationship to an I-thou relationship is an inward experience that gives birth to a mutual oneness that is only possible through love. The I-thou relation characterizes love and it is in and through love that it can be understood. Without love, others appear merely as objects or *filled up questionnaires*, as Marcel puts it. But according to him, “The more I love a being and the more I participate in his life, the less adequate this way of thinking is shown to be. The beloved is beyond all these questions; they seem insignificant and absolutely external.”<sup>51</sup> It is in I-thou relation of love that there is breaking of oneself, as Marcel puts, “I abolish the sort of constriction which makes me shrink into myself and which deforms me.”<sup>52</sup> It is the lack of love that creates the abyss between two persons, thereby this is the disfigurement of oneself; but it is in union with the other in love that growth of oneself with others takes place. Anything that shuts and separates the “I” from the thou is an antithesis of love. Thus, if love is that necessary condition

---

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel’s Mystery of Being*, 79-80.

<sup>51</sup> Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, 158. Marcel also stresses that “. . . there cannot be an encounter or a meeting in a fullest sense of the word except between beings endowed with a certain inwardness: and the encounter between such beings resists, of its very nature, the attempt to express it in merely visual terms, where the collision of billiard or conquet balls, for instance, obviously does not.” See Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:169.

<sup>52</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 34.



for the oneness of persons in Gabriel Marcel's I-thou, it thus seems clear that intersubjectivity is love as such. It is love that grounds this intersubjective bond of mutual openness and availability in a community of persons.

Intersubjectivity, a community of love, is the doorway towards *being*, the fullness of life. As such, love affirms *being*. It is love (as well as the other concrete approaches such as fidelity and hope) that grounds Marcel's whole ontology for love which according to him is, "the essential ontological datum."<sup>53</sup>

Love, however, tends to be only illusory because its essence ceases in death. Marcel's response to this is that love defies death as it is grounded on the Absolute Reality. As such, love essentially implies the eternal to Marcel. So, to him, to love the beloved is to say, "Thou, at least, thou shalt not die."<sup>54</sup> That is to say, as Marcel goes on to say, "Because I love you, because I affirm you as being, there is something in you which can bridge the abyss that I vaguely call 'death.'"<sup>55</sup> What death destroys is the beloved's physical presence. That is, insofar as the beloved is construed in the context of *having*, that he or she is merely an *it*, an object, makes him or her destructible. But insofar as he or she is regarded as non-objectifiable, a *thou*, or a presence, the beloved is freed from the nature of things and indestructibility. The indestructibility of the beloved, Marcel writes, "is much more that of a bond than that of an object."<sup>56</sup> To Marcel love is meant to be perpetual and thus, love essentially implies fidelity.

---

<sup>53</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 167. Hence, to Marcel, to impose problem and primary reflection on love can only lead to the refusal and denial of being. See Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:52-59.

<sup>54</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:61.

<sup>55</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:62.

<sup>56</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:154.



## Fidelity

### Fidelity as the Preservation of Love

If intersubjectivity is communion and togetherness in love, fidelity is that day-to-day testimony of such love. To Marcel, there is no doubt that intersubjectivity is meant to be perpetual and fruitful, otherwise love has no sense at all. It is fidelity that waters love to be fruitful and lasting. But in what sense does fidelity serve as the perpetuation of love? What exactly is fidelity? What does it really mean to swear fidelity?

Marcel's analysis of fidelity seeks to understand the possibility of preserving promise in relationship even in a difficult time that the unknown future may bring. In *Being and Having*<sup>57</sup> Marcel illustrates the possibility of turning from a promise. In one's visit to a sick friend, he is moved by his friend's pitiful condition. Out of compassion and sympathy he promised to visit his friend again. But when the time came such a promise is challenged. Now, he does not feel the same sympathy as he had when he made the first visit. However, so that he will not disappoint his friend, he visits him, but with an unwilling heart. For the sick person, such a visit was an act of fidelity, but deep inside his friend hides insincerity and hypocrisy. Marcel describes a similar situation in *Creative Fidelity*<sup>58</sup> but in the context of marriage wherein the commitment between the husband and wife is challenged as the man no longer feels the same way as he had before.

Implied from these illustrations is that fidelity is a choice. The fact that commitment is mutual poses a more serious problem because it implies that the wife's disposition and commitment could possibly change also. Both husband and wife have

---

<sup>57</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 47-56.

<sup>58</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 157-158. See also Marcel, *Being and Having*, 158.



the tendency of withdrawing from the vow that they have solemnly made. As Marcel explains, “It is an essential characteristic of the being to whom I give my fidelity to be not only liable to be betrayed, but also in some manner affected by my betrayal.”<sup>59</sup>

While fidelity is a possibility, so is betrayal. Fidelity comes into being where betrayal is potential. Therefore, it is possible to make a commitment.

Every relationship is threatened by the human tendency to withdraw from a promise or vow once made at the portal of relationship. On the one hand, the fact that human persons are always open to change entails a risk because at any moment the self could close itself from the other. But on the other hand, this given open possibility can be also an opportunity to pursue and nurture the relationship.

According to Marcel, fidelity not built on certain conditions. If fidelity is conditional, it loses its meaning. Furthermore, fidelity cannot be deduced to mere constancy, compromise, conformity, and mere duty for it is neither egocentric nor merely a principle-centered kind of living. It is not “a mode of affection for oneself, of human self-respect, of pride.”<sup>60</sup> It is not “a gratuitous affirmation either of an emotional or of purely volitional nature, but a total response to an appeal the other person makes to us.”<sup>61</sup>

#### Fidelity Characterizes Unconditionality and Permanency

Fidelity, according to Marcel, characterizes unconditionality for it demands an unconditional promise or vow. Fidelity postulates the permanency of a promise and in that alone it can be meaningful, because, according to Marcel, “all fidelity is based on

---

<sup>59</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 96.

<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 164.

<sup>61</sup> V.J. Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community: A Study of Intersubjectivity in Existentialism with Special Reference to Marcel, Sartre and the Concept of Sangha in Buddhism* (New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1991), 163.



a certain relation which is felt to be inalterable, and therefore on an assurance which cannot be fleeting.”<sup>62</sup> That is why “when I commit myself,” he adds, “I grant in principle that the commitment will not again be put in question.”<sup>63</sup> Fidelity, thus, is neither an abstract affirmation nor merely an assertion of certain principles or ideas to live by for “fidelity can only be shown towards a person, never at all to a notion or an ideal.”<sup>64</sup>

Fidelity is “the recognition of something permanent,” [of a presence, and] “the active perpetuation of presence.”<sup>65</sup> As such, fidelity can be properly construed as presence, a profound concept that Marcel painstakingly reflected upon. Fidelity as presence goes beyond the realm of the problematic<sup>66</sup> approach to reality for as Marcel says, “Presence is *mystery* in the exact measure in which it is presence.”<sup>67</sup> So, fidelity is neither a mere body of doctrine nor a physical object for it is of “the nature of presence as presence to be uncircumscribed.”<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 164.

<sup>63</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 162.

<sup>64</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 96.

<sup>65</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existence*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), 22. See also *Being and Having*, 96. He construes fidelity not in the realm of the problematic but in mystery.

<sup>66</sup> According to Marcel, when fidelity is construed in the problematic sense “all fidelity seems incomprehensible, impracticable, a wager, and scandalous too” because it ends up objectifying the other person. “Here we are,” he goes on to say, “in the realm in which there is something that cannot be viewed as a spectacle either by oneself or by others, of something, therefore, which cannot be reflected upon without danger.” See Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 163.

<sup>67</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, 22. Italics added.

<sup>68</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, 22.



## Fidelity as a Response to a Person

Fidelity is always a response to a person, a thou,<sup>69</sup> who transcends the level of objects, and who can respond and pledge fidelity as well. That is to say, according to Marcel, “between him and me there arises a relationship which, in a sense, surpasses my awareness of him; he is not only before me, he is also within me—or, rather, these categories are transcended, they have no longer any meaning.”<sup>70</sup>

To see the beloved as presence means to stand up to whatever future circumstance may bring. The ‘I’ does not fail and does not slip away, but freely makes oneself abiding and present to a thou even in times of difficulty.<sup>71</sup> Marcel further illustrates, “I do not know what future awaits us or ever, in a sense, what person he will be tomorrow; the very fact of my not knowing is what gives worth and weight to my promise.”<sup>72</sup> That active perpetuation of presence against the unknown is what it means to swear fidelity.

Fidelity is creative for it aims to revitalize and enrich relationship. Marcel stresses that fidelity “prolongs presence which itself corresponds to a certain kind of hold which being has upon us; because it multiplies and deepens the effect of this presence almost unfathomably in our lives.”<sup>73</sup> As Manuel Dy, a Filipino philosopher writes, presence is that a “‘life’ of love . . . and creative fidelity is no other than preserving this ‘being.’”<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> “Towards Being or towards a Human Being.” See Marcel, *Being and Having*, 43.

<sup>70</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, 24. See also Marcel *Creative Fidelity*, 154.

<sup>71</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 154.

<sup>72</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 47.

<sup>73</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, 23.

<sup>74</sup> Manuel B. Dy Jr., “From Fidelity to Faith: A Marcelian Approach,” in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986), 273.



Thus, to swear fidelity is not a pledge for the consistency of a certain feeling of sympathy, for instance, to a sick friend or a promise to be kept at the same level of romance with a spouse as alluded above. Instead, fidelity is a free act that takes responsibility for others as a response to an appeal. In this sense fidelity is creative as it essentially characterizes *disponibilité* because it is a life that is freely open and available for others despite the guaranteed changeable state of feeling. As Marcel says, “creative fidelity consists in maintaining ourselves actively in a permeable state; and there is a mysterious interchange between this free act and the gift granted in response to it.”<sup>75</sup> As such, fidelity is basically unifying for it is an intersubjective experience that is ever renewed by the creative commitment between an I and a thou.

As fidelity inescapably implies permanency and unconditionality this means that fidelity can never be purely humanistic in structure. For so long as breaking a promise is a human disposition, human persons themselves cannot be the foundation of their promises. Fidelity thus needs to be anchored upon an absolute Being, the Absolute Thou. That is why Marcel talks about “being as the place of fidelity.”<sup>76</sup> He argues that faith is the guiding principle of fidelity, for “faith is essentially fidelity, and in the highest possible form.”<sup>77</sup> How faith grounds fidelity will be discussed in Chapter Seven. Meanwhile the succeeding section discusses hope as the third pillar of intersubjectivity. The unconditionality and permanency of love and fidelity imply the assurance of hope.

---

<sup>75</sup> Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence*, 24.

<sup>76</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 41.

<sup>77</sup> Marcel, *Being and having*, 22.



## Hope

What inspires the eternal characteristics of love and fidelity is hope. If fidelity is the preservation of love for Marcel, hope is the life force of fidelity without which it is purposeless to be faithful to another. As Marcel puts it, “hope is for the soul what breathing is for the living organism. Where hope is lacking, the soul dries up and withers.”<sup>78</sup> Hope, thus, is the assurance that love is not in vain; it gives one the reason to love and be faithful to that love amidst the temptation of betrayal and the possibility of despair. Hope affirms the meaningfulness of life; it frees the being of love from its confinement in space and time through the assurance of an infinite Presence in which it is oriented.

It is very difficult to define hope precisely, according to Marcel, because like love and fidelity, it resides in the realm of mystery not in the realm of *problem*. In effect, Marcel only attempts to describe the characteristics of hope, which shares the qualities of love and fidelity. Hope for Marcel characterizes *disponibilité*, community, and eternity.

### Hope as Radical Openness

Hope, according to Marcel, cannot be precisely expressed conceptually, but it can only be lived. As such, hope reveals Marcel’s notion of *being* as opposed to *having*. Hope concerns what human persons can *be*, not what they can *have* or possess. In this connection, Marcel distinguishes hope from desire. Hope goes beyond desire. Desire as aligned in the context of *having* is ego-centric. It seeks self-possession and self-interest. It sets conditions and expectations. It only wills *something* for oneself.<sup>79</sup> But hope is openness towards the other transcending the

---

<sup>78</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 10-11.

<sup>79</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:162.



realm of things. Hope does not set conditions for it is not bound merely to one's desire. Hope is not directed to oneself, but it is directed inside out. Thus, hope is the prolongation of *disponibilité*. It is a radical openness towards others and to the transcendence.

Hope is a humble attitude of opening oneself to the reality of being that life can be meaningful amidst the reality of the 'broken world' with the assurance that something more is yet to come. Hope points back to the *exigence of being*, that deep hunger for fullness and meaning. In fact, Marcel says that hope as such is the *exigence* for the transcendence. Marcel explains, "I once wrote that hope is the stuff of which our soul is woven. 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?"<sup>80</sup> Thus, hope as a *driving force* legitimizes human deep urge for fullness.

Hope is the refusal to succumb to one's reality as the only reality, but rather, it is confidence that a greater reality encompasses one's being. "Hope," Marcel expresses, "consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all inventories and all calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me, which cannot but will that which I will, if what I will deserves to be willed and is, in fact, willed by the whole of my being."<sup>81</sup> As such it is the intension of hope to fulfill rather than to frustrate the human spirit.

---

<sup>80</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:162.

<sup>81</sup> See Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1956), 28. He also says: "It is impossible that I should be alone in willing this cure; it is impossible that reality its inward depth should be hostile so much as indifferent to what I assert is in itself a good. It is quite useless to tell me of discouraging cases or examples: beyond all experience, all probability, all statistics, I assert that a given order shall be re-established; that reality is on my side in willing it to be so. I do not wish; I assert; such is the prophetic tone of true hope. See *Philosophy of Existentialism*, 28.



Another way to look at hope as openness is that it is essentially trust.<sup>82</sup> Trust, according to Marcel, is not a mere wish or desire, but rather the courage to face despondencies in life with the “personal assurance that however black things may seem, my present intolerable situation cannot be final; there has to be some way out,”<sup>83</sup> and “it will be found.”<sup>84</sup> To Marcel, human persons stand between two possibilities they are capable to enter into, hope and despair. As Marcel says, “There can, strictly speaking, be no hope, except when the temptation to despair exists.”<sup>85</sup> As such, where despair is possible, so is hope. To hope is to choose not to despair. To despair is a result of breaking away from others and turning to oneself as the only reality and the source of fulfillment. Despair “appears as an enchantment,” Marcel observes, “or more exactly as a kind of witchcraft, whose evil action has a bearing on all which goes to form the very substance of a person’s life.”<sup>86</sup> Despair gradually bugs down a persons’ spirit to the point that despair can consequently lead to suicide. Despair is a prison for the self whose doorway is isolation from others whereas hope

---

<sup>82</sup> The French word *espérance* can be translated either as “hope” or “trust.” See Anderson, *Commentary on Marcel’s Mystery of Being*, 170.

<sup>83</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:160. See further 159, 161. See also *Homo Viator*, 51.

<sup>84</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 52.

<sup>85</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 36. Elsewhere Marcel says, “hope only comes to its full value insofar as we are liable to utter despair.” See Gabriel Marcel, “Some Reflections on Existentialism,” *Philosophy Today* 8 (1964): 256.

<sup>86</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 42. Marcel elaborates: “To despair would be to say, ‘I have been disappointed so many times there is every reason to expect that I shall be again to-day’; it would be to declare this wound incurable, this wound which not only is inflicted by aspiration but which is separation. ‘I shall never again be anything but the would, mutilated creature I am to-day. Death alone can end my trouble; and it will do so only by ending me myself. That is all destiny is able to do for me—destiny, that strange doctor which can only cure the disease by killing the sufferer.’ The despairing man not only contemplates and sets before himself the dismal repetition, the externalization of a situation in which he is caught like a ship in a sea of ice. By a paradox which is difficult to conceive, he anticipates this repetition. He sees it at any moment, and simultaneously he has the bitter certainty that this anticipation will not spare him from living through the same trial day by day until the extinction which, to tell the truth, he anticipates likewise, not seeing it as a remedy but as a supreme outrage to the departed for whom his mourning does at least ensure the shadow of survival. See *Homo Viator*, 42.



is communion with others, that is, giving of oneself that leads to freedom. Hope, Marcel asserts, is “not simply a hope for one’s own self; it is the means of spreading one’s hope, keeping its flame a radiance of hope burning around one . . . it is probably only by so doing that a man can keep it alive in the depths of his own being.”<sup>87</sup>

### Hope as Communal

Thus, hope is other-oriented. Hope is essentially intersubjective. Marcel succinctly writes in his famous dictum: “I hope in thee for us.”<sup>88</sup> Hope is inconceivable outside a community of persons committed to love each other. Hence, to hope is to live in a community built upon love. As such, according to Marcel, “hope is essentially the availability of a soul which entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge the transcendent act—the act establishing the vital regeneration of which this experience affords both the pledge and the first-fruits.”<sup>89</sup> Hope is centered on the “we” reality, the oneness of the *I* and the *thou* in love, which are in mutual and continuous dialogue. Hope as concretely lived communally proves that it is not an illusion. Hope frees human persons from egocentrism which leads to anxiety, despair, and finally to suicide as it draws them to affirm life and participate into a universal communion with others where life’s challenges can be overcome and transcended. It is in this communal participation which hope embodies that spirit of optimism for the future is possible.

---

<sup>87</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:160.

<sup>88</sup> Marcel explains: “This presence is incarnated in the ‘us’ for whom ‘I hope in Thee,’ that is to say in a communion of which I proclaim the indestructibility.” See Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 66.

<sup>89</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 67.



## Hope Implies Eternity

Hope characterizes the salvific element. As the Indian philosopher Varghese Manimala comments, “hope is directed towards salvation; it involves coming out of darkness of illness, separation, exile or slavery.”<sup>90</sup> Hope as *exigence* for the transcendence confirms the finitude of human persons. As Marcel asserts, human persons “do not of themselves offer any consistency or any guarantee of solidity. It is only when they are referred back to a superhuman order of which here below we are able but to trace the indications, that they take on a truly holy character.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, hope is oriented towards eternity. Hope as construed in the light of *mystery* and *being* opposes any venture for the temporal, naturalistic, and problematic orientation, which curtails any meaningfulness that is related to the absolute. Hope, as a virtue, “is not toward any striving for some temporal effect but commitment in a *vertical dimension* that provides concernless meaningfulness.”<sup>92</sup> Hope essentially links the *exigence of being*, meaning, value, and sacredness of life to the infinite Being who is, to Marcel, God the absolute Thou. This unity of life according to Marcel is “an expression of a divine gift.”<sup>93</sup>

## Conclusion

Marcel’s philosophy of existence is a deep reflection upon ontology that is rooted in intersubjectivity. One sees a philosophy of discovery of oneself, which is essentially communitarian. That human persons are essentially intersubjective is not merely an afterthought in Marcel, but rather it is a reality that emerges from the very structure of human persons as incarnate beings. This given state of openness in

---

<sup>90</sup> Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 167.

<sup>91</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Martin A. Bertman, “Gabriel Marcel on Hope,” *Philosophy Today* 14 (1970): 102. Italics added.

<sup>93</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:164.



human persons posits a reality of communal experiences arising from free and mutual responses.

At the heart of Marcel's intersubjectivity are love, creative fidelity, and hope. These are the pillars of intersubjectivity that are inseparable from each other in nature. These three are Marcel's concrete approaches to the affirmation of God, the Absolute Thou. Intersubjectivity as alluded to reveals oneness of human persons in response to one another's appeal who continually cherish each other in creative fidelity with the prophetic assurance of hope/trust that this love is not in vain and fleeting. Love, fidelity and hope are inseparable and interrelated in which it is impossible to talk about the entirety of one without the other two. But it is love that acts as the fundamental genesis of this oneness between the I and the thou. Love gives birth to openness, availability, and commitment. Where there is love there is fidelity and hope and it is love that binds the two. Fidelity and hope always have love as their point of reference. For it is in love that human persons can be faithful and where hope or trust is conceivable.

In intersubjectivity one recognizes that human persons are basically oriented to *being* and to a larger reality God, the Absolute Thou. Fidelity, love, and hope essentially demand unconditionality and eternity. They inescapably reveal the realm of the absolute reality, something unconditional and eternal, for it is only in these terms, according to Marcel, that fullness and value in life are realizable. Human persons' *exigence of being*, in the final analysis for Marcel, is the *exigence* for the absolute Being, God the Absolute Thou. Hence, Marcel's concrete ontology implies theology.



## CHAPTER 6

### MARCEL'S NOTION OF ABSOLUTE THOU

#### Absolute Thou as Non-Objective

God, for Gabriel Marcel, cannot be confined in the realm of *problem*. Marcel's understanding of God is conceived in the realm of *mystery*. God, for Marcel, is irreducible to the level of concepts or things that can be isolated and confined for a scientific analysis. To approach God abstractly can fatally reduce God to mere thought.<sup>1</sup> Thus, instead of giving a rational argumentation to prove the existence of God, which many philosophers of religion do, Marcel accents the personal experiential side of human persons. The existential side, concrete and embodied experiences such as love, fidelity and hope, he argues, set forth a case for an authentic and a meaningful affirmation of God. It draws human persons to a belief in God. Proofs do not. Though Marcel argues from the concrete experience, he was not irrational, in fact he was rational but not in the traditional sense which he attacks.

Marcel rejects the Traditional or Classical Theism for he wants to be freed from its purely rationalistic grip and the need to emphasize the existential relevance of God in the lives of human persons. Classical Theism, which represents the Aristotelean-Thomistic tradition, seeks to establish the existence of God through Causality<sup>2</sup> using a priori and a posteriori proofs.<sup>3</sup> God in this tradition is pictured as

---

<sup>1</sup> Etienne Gilson, "A Unique Philosopher," *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 279.

<sup>2</sup> Among the other classical theists who influenced the Western Christianity are Augustine, Anselm, Calvin and the like. See Allan Coppedge, *The God who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 320.



timeless, immutable, and impassable.<sup>4</sup> He is construed as the uncaused cause, Prime Mover, final cause of creations—distant and separated from his creations. The image of a king and power is ascribed to this view of God.<sup>5</sup>

According to Marcel, the concept of Causality brings difficulties and predicaments in the understanding of God and human persons. It is very important not to misinterpret Marcel here. What Marcel attacks on Causality is the sphere of instrumental causality.<sup>6</sup> That is, the realm of the problem and primary reflection are taken as an explanation for God which depict a relation between God and objects or humans and things. For if God is seen in the realm of Causality, it implies a mechanistic deity that manipulates and objectifies human persons.

---

<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, *a posteriori* (literally means “comes after experience”) proofs, also known as Cosmological argument, primarily refers to Thomas Aquinas’ classic “Five ways”. Aquinas argues from Causality: cause to effect and effect to cause. That is, it proves God’s existence from the existence of the world. The experience of the latter posits the former as its cause. The “Five Ways” are: arguments from motion, efficient causality, contingency, design, and the various degrees of perfection. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 2, a. 3; See also John H. Hick, ed. *Classical Contemporary Readings in Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1970), 38-44. On the other hand, *a priori* (which means ‘prior to experience’) proof, which is also called Ontological Argument, deduces the existence of God from the *idea* of Him as infinite or perfect Being present in human persons’ mind. St. Anselm argues for the greatest Being that can be thought of and Rene Descartes argues for the clear and distinct idea of an absolute perfect Being. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz advances the argument. He reasons that the concept of the infinite Being contains no contradiction because the notion of God strongly suggests his existence. See Hick, ed. *Classical Contemporary Readings in Philosophy of Religion*, 28-30. See also Toner, Patrick, “The Existence of God,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. Available from: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm>, accessed: 13 July 2012. To many theistic philosophers, however, the ontological argument is problematic as far as its logical validity is concerned. According to Gaunilon criticism ontological argument of Anselm fails to show a logical transition from the conceptual to the real order. Also, Immanuel Kant argues that what is logically necessary does not have to be existentially necessary. See Hick, ed. *Classical Contemporary Readings in Philosophy of Religion*, 128-134.

<sup>4</sup> Coppedge, *The God who is Triune*, 321.

<sup>5</sup> Coppedge, *The God who is Triune*, 320.

<sup>6</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*, ed. Brendan Sweetman (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine’s Press, 2011).70-71. See Francis J. Lescoe, *Existentialism With or Without God* (New York: Alba House, 1974), 124-125.



Furthermore, Marcel's onslaught on Causality arises from the creative nature of human persons endowed with freedom and creativity.<sup>7</sup> If God is the efficient cause of human persons, then the latter are denied of freedom and creativity. This further depicts a robotic and a pre-determined relationship between God and human persons.<sup>8</sup> As James Collins reasons, this would "destroy the personal relationships upon which religious life feeds."<sup>9</sup> It is for the above consideration that Marcel writes, "We must finish with the idea of a God-cause, of a God concentrating in himself all causality, or even, in a more precise language with every teleological usage of the notion of causality."<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, Marcel wants to repudiate the thinking that *proving*, in this context of a rationalistic argumentation of the existence of God, is necessary in order for one to believe. Put it another way, proofs are inefficacious to convince the unbeliever. By proof, Marcel means proof that is purely logical in nature. That is, "strict logical inference: from a certain well-established proposition (or should we say propositions) one deduces another proposition."<sup>11</sup> These proofs or arguments for the existence of God are designed to persuade atheists.<sup>12</sup> They presuppose that one is already

---

<sup>7</sup> Rudolf J. Gerber, "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics," *Philosophy Today* 12 (Winter 1968): 275.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel and other existentialist philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty (agnostic) and Jean-Paul Sartre (atheist), reject the notion of causality for its detrimental effect. Ponty and Sartre argue that if Absolute exists then it follows the death of freedom and creativity in human persons. See Rudolph R. Hanley, "Causality and Atheism: The Difficulty with the Creative God in Existential Phenomenology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 44 (1970): 232.

<sup>9</sup> Lescoe, *Existentialism*, 125.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Gerber, "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics," 275.

<sup>11</sup> Salvino Azzopardi, "Proving the Existence of God," *Dialogue and Alliance* 6 (Spring 1992): 8. Available from: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=119&sid=5b1f8261-68bc-4d75-a9c0-7770d42f56b6%40sessionmgr110>, accessed: 28 June 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 178.



grounded oneself on God. Despite these proofs of logical nature Marcel sees a paradox in their relation to the unbelievers and believers. The paradox is that these proofs falsify the assumed efficaciousness of proofs. That is, while they are powerless to convince the unbelievers, they tend to have no useful purpose to those who are already believers.<sup>13</sup> It is no wonder, Marcel points out, that even the “historians of philosophy who expound them most minutely” found these proofs inefficacious.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, while Marcel recognizes the logical coherency of traditional proofs, he disagrees that these arguments in themselves make unbelievers believe. Rational arguments are not enough for those who choose not to believe in God. For as Marcel asserts, “If a man has experienced the presence of God, not only has he no need of proofs, he may even go so far as to consider the idea of a demonstration as a slur on what is, for him, a sacred evidence. Now from the point of view of a philosophy of existence, it is this sort of testimony which is the central and irreducible datum.”<sup>15</sup> It could be easy to misread Marcel here. But, he is not suggesting that rational argument for God’s existence has no value at all. What he is proposing is that a purely rationalistic argument for God is inadequate and that an argument for a genuine affirmation of God must engage personal experience. However, as per the context of problem and primary reflection the experiential aspect of human persons is suppressed and excluded.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for Marcel, experience is the essential element for the affirmation of God.

---

<sup>13</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 2, *Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague, (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 174, 176.

<sup>14</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:174.

<sup>15</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:176.

<sup>16</sup> Though Marcel repudiate to call philosophical approach to the affirmation of God rational argument or proof as that of the Traditional theism, it does not mean that his approach is non-rational. What is evident in Marcel is a fusion of reason and experience as he writes: “reflection must confirm the legitimacy of a faith, which is grasp at first in its abstract essence.” One significant contemporary



## God as Experiential, as Thou, and as Presence

Recall that in the realm of the problematic and primary reflection, which characterizes scientific investigation, the subject is detached from the object—so that in an attempt to provide a solution to a problem, human persons are only involved with conceptualization but lack *personal* participation in actual life. This is not the case in the question of the existence of God, for as Gerber observes, “Marcel’s positive approach to God begins with a participation in the subjective order which cannot be objectified.”<sup>17</sup> Thus, God is not an object, but He is a Thou, a personal presence to be experienced. As Marcel holds, “every relation of being to being is personal and that the relation between me and God is nothing if it is not a relation of being with being, or strictly, of being with itself . . . While an empirical *thou* can be converted into a *him*, God is the absolute *Thou* who can never become a *him*.”<sup>18</sup>

As there are vast human experiences, not penetrable by primary reflection, such as love, commitment, fidelity, and hope that human persons are inseparably involved in, so the quest for the affirmation of God always demands the quester’s participation as God is irreducible to a concept or an object. It is through secondary reflection, which reestablishes the unity of experience, that human persons may retrieve the awareness of the mystery or the metaproblematic reality that is spurned by problematic thinking.<sup>19</sup> It is also secondary reflection or “hyperphenomenology” that

---

philosopher writing about Marcel’s philosophy today who acknowledge this positive reading on Marcel is Brendan Sweetman. See Brendan Sweetman, *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 78-80.

<sup>17</sup> Gerber, “Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics,” 276.

<sup>18</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal* (Chicago: Henry Regnelli Company, 1952), 137. Elsewhere, Marcel states: “. . . this transcendental reality cannot be thought of, except as a second person, as a ‘thou’ to which invocation address itself.” See Gabriel Marcel, “Some Reflections on Existentialism,” *Philosophy Today* 8 (1964): 256.

<sup>19</sup> For Marcel, God can only be approached through secondary reflection as it constitutes “a response of a creature to the infinite being to whom it is conscious of owing everything that it has and



explains the ordinary experiences that are not only physical but also *spiritual*.<sup>20</sup> To Marcel, this spiritual dimension of human persons, which is basically intersubjective is a manifestation of God in the world.

### **Exigence of Being and Intersubjectivity Situate the Affirmation of the Absolute Thou**

*Exigence of being* and intersubjectivity set the ground for the consideration of the Absolute Thou in Marcel's philosophy. The deepest ontological or metaphysical question, "Who am I?", according to Marcel, presupposes not only the other persons, but also God who in the final analysis can answer the question:

"Who am I?" You [absolute Thou] alone really know me and judge me; to doubt you is not to free myself, but to annihilate myself. But to view your reality as problematic would be to doubt you, and what is more, to deny you; for a problem exists only through my agency and for me, the person who raises it, and in the present case, it is I who am placed in question in that irrevocable act in which I humble my pride and yield myself.<sup>21</sup>

Basically, *exigence of being* is situated in intersubjectivity because it is only in the context of relationship that the question, "Who am I?" is conceivable. Hence, it is in the context of concrete ontology, the inner need of transcendence and intersubjective relationships, wherein persons recognize their otherness in a depth experience of love, fidelity, and hope that set the consideration of God in Marcel's thought. As Marcel's asserts, "the *exigence* of God is simply the *exigence* of transcendence disclosing its true face, a face that was shown to us before in veils."<sup>22</sup>

---

upon whom it cannot impose any condition at all without scandal." See Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 47.

<sup>20</sup> "Spiritual" to Marcel means interpersonal. This dimension of human existence, according to Marcel, is trying to efface by science. See Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (Westminster, UK: Dacre Press, 1949), 192.

<sup>21</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. with an introduction by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964), 145.

<sup>22</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 1:24.



### “Conversion” as Precondition for the Sacral

In a world in which “technology enjoys absolute primacy,”<sup>23</sup> Marcel says that the *exigence of being* is suppressed. As such, there is a need for secondary reflection to look beyond the “broken world” and to quicken the awareness of the transcendence. In a technical era, according to Marcel, the sacral or “the holiness of God”<sup>24</sup> can only manifest when a “conversion” of the self takes place. Marcel explains, “the only way to discover the path to the sacral is to turn away from the world and recapture simplicity, which is perhaps only another word for uniqueness and inwardness, *the favorite abode of the sacral.*”<sup>25</sup> But what precisely does Marcel mean by conversion here? He elaborates:

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 numberless. It is the inwardness we regain through an action which is not only free, but in fact is freedom *itself*. But we have to remember that in its essence inwardness is not tantamount to restriction, and it would be gravely deceptive to think so. And it is just as wrong to imagine the individual who becomes a unity all to himself on account of his conversion. The exact opposite is true; inwardness must be reciprocal; it is a relationship of one individual to another, of an “I” to a “Thou.”<sup>26</sup>

His consideration of God is guided by the attitude of *disponibilité* and the means of secondary reflection if the journey towards the Absolute Thou is to be fruitful. Hence, unless one wills to free oneself in the realm of mystery where one could be personally involved, the consideration of God ends up objectifying. As such, a change of attitude from problem to mystery is necessary. In the final analysis, Marcel . . .

---

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Searchings* (New York: Newman Press, 1967), 51.

<sup>24</sup> Marcel, *Searchings*, 51.

<sup>25</sup> Marcel, *Searchings*, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Marcel, *Searchings*, 52-53.



was looking not for an abstraction or a synthesis. He was searching for a real, personal God: a God in Whom he could hope, Whom he could love and with Whom he could enter into a meaningful communion. Certainly *this* is the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And because God is not some impersonal force or fruit of the dialectic, but rather a person, I can thus talk to Him, invoke Him and try to work out my salvation with His help.<sup>27</sup>

### **Fidelity, Love, and Hope: Concrete Approaches to the Absolute Thou**

As alluded to in Chapter Five, the path to being, the meaning and the fullness in life, is revealed in intersubjectivity, the I-thou relationship where its pillars of love, fidelity, and hope can be experienced. Inherent in love, fidelity, and hope are the demand for unconditionality and permanency. Such demands necessitate a sure foundation that can sustain them. The answer cannot be that human persons themselves are the foundation because of their finitude. Hence, according to Marcel, the answer inescapably points to an infinite reality, God the Absolute Thou. As Marcel says, “unconditionality is the true sign of God’s presence.”<sup>28</sup> Because God the Absolute Thou is the eternal hope, it is in and through Him that this being of love is not fleeting but will endure for eternity. These three, love, fidelity, and hope are the concrete approaches to the affirmation of God the Absolute Thou in Marcel’s philosophy.

Love, fidelity, and hope reveal further the nature of God, the Absolute Thou as presence. In love, the Absolute Thou is an open presence; in faith, the Absolute Thou is the abiding presence, and in hope, the Absolute Thou is the eternal presence.

#### **Love: Absolute Thou as Open Presence**

Love, as noted in the previous chapter, is a communion between persons construed as *thous* who are mutually engaged with each other in a free or un-coercive

---

<sup>27</sup> Lescoe, *Existentialism*, 87-88.

<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Marcel, “Theism and Personal Relationships,” *Cross Currents* 1 (1950-51): 40.



participation. Love implies the Absolute Thou who is the guarantee of oneness and “the very cement which binds the whole into one,”<sup>29</sup> and the fulfillment of I-thou relationship.

“To love a being,” Marcel stresses, is to say “Thou, at least, thou shalt not die,”<sup>30</sup> and that is to proclaim the beloved’s indestructibility as love transcends the spatio-temporal limitations. Love that is grounded in the Absolute Thou is a communion that is assured under the umbrella of eternity. Marcel writes, “Whatever changes may intervene in what I see before me you and I will persist as one: the event that has occurred [death] and which belongs to the order of accident, cannot nullify the promise of eternity which is enclosed in our love, in our mutual pledge.”<sup>31</sup>

This prophetic assurance of love (that the beloved will not die as alluded to) points out the reality of God, the Absolute Thou. In fact, such prophetic affirmation of love “is already a faith and hope in the power, the goodness, the love of the Absolute Thou who is invoked as always present, always concerned, always willing and able and determined to sustain in the communion of love every created thou who is alive or apparently dead.”<sup>32</sup> Marcel explains that the indestructibility, perenniality, and eternity that love demands are a clear affirmation of the presence of the Absolute Thou. In fact, Marcel holds that even the threat of death implies the presence of the Absolute Thou. He elaborates it this way, “What cannot be accepted is the death of

---

<sup>29</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 60-61.

<sup>30</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:61.

<sup>31</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:154-155.

<sup>32</sup> Vincent Miceli, *Ascent to Being: Gabriel's Philosophy of Communion* (New York: Desclee Company, 1965), 137-138. Marcel elaborates, “there is no human love worthy of the name which does not represent for him who exercises it both a pledge and a seed of immortality: but, on the other hand, it is really not possible to exercise this love without discovering that it cannot constitute a closed system, that it passes beyond itself in every direction, that it really demands for its complete realisation a universal communion outside which it cannot be satisfied and is destined to be corrupted and lost in the end. Moreover, this universal communion itself can only be centred upon an absolute Thou”. See Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 152.



the beloved one; more deeply still the death of love itself; and this non-acceptance is perhaps the most genuine mark of the divine in ourselves.”<sup>33</sup>

The Absolute Thou is pure charity,<sup>34</sup> the center of all unconditional loves with whom human persons can have their being according to Marcel. The Absolute Thou cannot deceive the empirical thous. A community of I-thou relationship necessitates a relationship to the Absolute Thou as the “living centre, whose manifest presence penetrates and transforms the members . . . Without the centre of the relationships will have no coherence and unity.”<sup>35</sup> Anderson expresses some illuminating insights on the nature of God the Absolute Thou who is the source of the I-thou relationship:

Marcel holds that in order to offer unconditional love, love that has no temporal limits, to another creature, I must, at least vaguely and prereflectively, experience both my beloved and myself to be participating in a being that possesses eternal value, a being that can assure me that my loved one will always be worthy of my love and that I can always be assisted to be faithful to my commitment. Such a being, he has argued, can only be an absolute Thou who in love is perpetually united to us. Now such a God, he reasons, whose loving presence in his creatures calls them to give themselves totally to each other and assists them in doing so, such a God cannot deny or annihilate their love. Of course, if their love is not annihilated, the lovers must be immortal. Perhaps we could also say that insofar as lovers experience each other to have values that are not limited in time, and only that experience can explain their offering unconditional love to each other, the lovers experience themselves and their love to transcend time.<sup>36</sup>

As open Presence, the Absolute Thou is always deeply within each of the human *thous* in love. Marcel uses a metaphor to describe the Absolute Thou profoundly in musical terms—He is the suprapersonal unity of beings. He elaborates at the closing of *The Mystery of Being*:

Let me make use again of one of the musical comparisons for which you know I have a taste, and say that from the moment when we open ourselves to these

---

<sup>33</sup> Marcel, “Theism and Personal Relationships,” 41.

<sup>34</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:170.

<sup>35</sup> Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 237.

<sup>36</sup> Anderson, *A Commentary to the Mystery of Being*, 169-170.



infiltrations of the invisible, we cease to be the unskilled and yet pretentious soloists we perhaps were at the start, and gradually become members, wide-eyed and brotherly, of an orchestra in which those whom we so inaptly call the dead are quite certainly much closer to Him of whom *we should not perhaps say that He conducts the symphony, but that He is the symphony in its profound and intelligible unity; a unity in which we can hope to be included only by degrees*, through individual trials, the sum total of which, though it cannot be foreseen by each of us, is inseparable from his own vocation.<sup>37</sup>

Anderson, commenting on the above quotation, expresses, “This God is not a Prime Mover, Supreme Substance, *ens realissimum*, or infinite unchanging perfection. Rather He is a God who is the very milieu, the common life, the intersubjective bond of beings. In a word, He is a God who is Love.”<sup>38</sup> Such is the Absolute Thou’s relationship to human persons, “ ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore, have I drawn you, taking pity on you,’ says the Absolute, and ever-present Lover to His chosen people.”<sup>39</sup> Such love is participated love. It safeguards one from isolation and alienation. As Miceli notes, “the divine and the human drag of love is ever upward toward communion with the creative I of the Absolute Lover, the Speaker of the ‘inner word’ or love, toward the Absolute Thou.”<sup>40</sup>

#### Fidelity: Absolute Thou as Abiding Presence

It is the nature of fidelity to demand unconditionality in a commitment to other persons in every true relationship. But unconditionality in a purely humanistic sense is inconceivable. Hence, unconditional fidelity is only realizable in faith, that is, in relationship to God the Absolute Thou. To Marcel, the unconditionality of fidelity is a mark of the Absolute Thou’s abiding presence in every genuine relationship.

---

<sup>37</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:187. Italics added.

<sup>38</sup> Anderson, “Notions of Being,” 42.

<sup>39</sup> Miceli, *Ascent to Being*, 136.

<sup>40</sup> Miceli, *Ascent to Being*, 136.



There are two ways to look at faith according to Marcel: conviction and commitment. On the one hand, faith as conviction, Marcel elaborates, “implies a kind of inner closure.”<sup>41</sup> Conviction is tied to a kind of idea or proposition or things. As Marcel puts it, conviction is “something which is external to me; but it implies no commitment on my part.”<sup>42</sup> Conviction is expressed in *believing that* particular doctrine is true. Anderson elucidates, “conviction does not involve a pledge of one’s self or a giving of one’s self or a commitment to follow anything; it simply pronounces an unchangeable judgment about something.”<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, faith as commitment is enriching and fruitful because it embodies a binding obligation.<sup>44</sup> Faith as commitment is expressed as *believing in*. It always involves a person. It necessitates, as Marcel elaborates, a “*giving of oneself, rallying to*”<sup>45</sup> and placing oneself “at the disposal of something or again that I pledge myself fundamentally and this pledge affects not only *what I have* but also *what I am*.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, faith as a commitment is always a belief in either a personal or a supra-personal reality.<sup>47</sup> Hence, faith always involves a thou or the Absolute Thou and availability or disponibilité to this thou or to the Absolute Thou. Here disponibilité is inseparable from fidelity and faith for it is basically a free response to the Absolute Thou’s abiding presence.

---

<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 133. Marcel elaborates: “Whatever happens or whatever may be said cannot alter what I think.” See *Creative Fidelity*, 131.

<sup>42</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 134. Marcel further explains that in conviction one does not bind oneself to that something.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *Commentary on Marcel’s Mystery of Being*, 130.

<sup>44</sup> Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 164. See also Lescoe, *Existentialism with or without God*, 109.

<sup>45</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 134.

<sup>46</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:77.

<sup>47</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 135.



Faith is always construed as intersubjective as it regards the Absolute Thou as the vital ground of the I and thou relationship. Lescoe writes,

Through faith as genuine commitment, I engage in a mystical encounter with the other. Such an encounter which implies a binding obligation, since it carries with it a complete bundling together of all the forces of being, adds a new dimension both to me and the other or the Thou. By becoming spiritually available to my neighbor, I immediately transcend the narrow limits of my own being. I overcome the restrictions of my egocentricity and discover at this moment the Absolute Thou. I find that God is the very ground of my faith and fidelity. I invoke Him and enter into loving communion with Him.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, in mutual love and fidelity between the “I” and the other, “thou,” human persons discover the Absolute Thou who alone can make eternal fidelity come to reality. To construe the Absolute Thou as the ground of love and fidelity is an act of humility as it is an acceptance of one’s insufficiency. The starting point, Marcel stresses, is not “my own will,” but rather, “Being itself—from commitment to God.”<sup>49</sup>

Marcel further elaborates,

Hence, this ground of fidelity which necessarily seems precarious to us as soon as we commit ourselves to one another who is unknown, seems unshakable when it is based not, to be sure, on a distinct apprehension of God as someone or other, but on a certain appeal delivered from the depths of my own insufficiency *ad summam altitudinem*: I have sometimes called this the absolute resort. This appeal presupposes a radical humility in the subject; a humility which is polarized by the very transcendence of the one it invokes. Here we are, as it were, at the juncture of the most stringent commitment and the most desperate expectation. It cannot be a matter of counting on oneself, on one’s own resources, to cope with this unbounded commitment; but in the act in which I commit myself, I at the same time extend an infinite credit to Him to Whom I did so; Hope seems nothing more than this.<sup>50</sup>

Given the fact of one’s insufficiency, it is in one’s faithfulness to God, the Absolute Thou that one’s unconditional fidelity to others can have its assurance to continue over time. In this way, fidelity is creative because it sees to it that

---

<sup>48</sup> Lescoe, *Existentialism: With or without God*, 110. See also Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 164.

<sup>49</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 53-54.

<sup>50</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 167.



faithfulness to others and to the Absolute Thou are always in a state of openness and permeability to the presence of the other. Marcel states,

It is because fidelity is creative that, like liberty itself, it infinitely transcends the limits of what can be prescribed. Creative when it is genuine, it is so fundamentally and in every way, for it possesses the mysterious power of renewing not only the person who practises it, but the recipient, however unworthy he may have been of it to start with. It is as though it had a chance—it is certain that there is nothing final here—to make him at long last pervious to the spirit which animates the inwardly consecrated soul. It is in this way that fidelity reveals its true nature, which is to be an evidence, a testimony. It is in this way, too, that a code of ethics centred on fidelity is irresistibly led to become attached to what is more than human, to a desire for the unconditional which is the requirement and the very mark of the Absolute in us.<sup>51</sup>

In the final analysis, the Absolute Thou is the abiding presence who is present in the I-thou relationship. The communion of love between the *I* and the *thou* can be perpetual in one's availability and openness to respond and to participate in the abiding presence of the Absolute Thou. The unconditional vow between human persons bears witness to the presence of the Absolute Thou in human relationship. In fact, Marcel also holds that even non-believers, so long as they are engaged in a sincere commitment to others, give an inarticulate witness to the presence God the Absolute Thou.

Not only that fidelity's demand for unconditionality testifies to God's abiding presence in human relationship, but also in its demand for eternity or indestructibility of love through faith in the Absolute Thou. The non-acceptability of death implies hope. Hence, hope is the last resort—the guarantor of fidelity and the reason not to despair. So, as Keen notes, “at the death of a loved one, fidelity is joined to faith as one hopes in God for the being of the other.”<sup>52</sup> Here love and faith are inseparable from hope which is the sign of the Absolute Thou's eternal presence.

---

<sup>51</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 133-134.

<sup>52</sup> Sam Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel's Thought,” in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers,



### Hope: Absolute Thou as Eternal Presence

Human persons' *exigence* or need for transcendence is a clear attestation of the centrality of God the Absolute Thou in human life. Intrinsic in the I and thou relationship, a community of love, is an urge or exigency for eternity, according to Marcel. Hope is the *exigence* for the transcendence that concerns one's deepest urge for fullness, the question of meaning, value, and identity, "Who am I?" It is the *driving force* behind a human person's search, undertaking, and aspiration to be<sup>53</sup> against the threat of trials, despair, and death. Hope reveals God the Absolute Thou who is the very object of the *exigence* in human persons' life and in whom one can trust. As alluded to, the *exigence of being*, in the final analysis, Marcel says, is the *exigence* of God the Absolute Thou. Hence, the whole human existence is an *invocation*, a calling directed towards God the Absolute Thou. As such, Marcel is saying that it is possible to hope. The *exigence* of God the Absolute Thou is a sign of the Absolute Thou's presence revealed in human existence that gives one the reason to hope. One only needs to be open with the right attitude to recognize His presence.

Hope inescapably reveals life as a divine gift—that human life has intrinsic value and meaning. Marcel points to "the sacred element . . . [in] any and every human existence" – the "certain absolute" which for him needs to be recognized if life needs to be meaningful.<sup>54</sup> The only explanation to this sense of meaning and value in life, according to Marcel, is God who reveals that life is a gift.<sup>55</sup> Hope, therefore, is an assurance that everything will not cease in death. The experience of "*guadium*

---

Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 114. See also Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 165.

<sup>53</sup> Hope and faith are inseparable. See Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:163.

<sup>55</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:120-124.



*essendi*, joy in existence,”<sup>56</sup> is a testimony that life is a gift from the Absolute Thou. As such, hope discloses the landmarks of the sense of the divine in human existence, the key and assurance of fulfillment, reasonableness, and authenticity of life.

Hope reveals the nature of the Absolute Thou who cannot contradict Himself. To despair is an act of treason, according to Marcel, precisely because it implies that a loving God can abandon someone. But because God the Absolute Thou cannot go against His nature, which is love, to hope in Him amidst the reality of despair and death is a reasonable and meaningful act. Marcel elaborates,

This is what determines the ontological position of hope—absolute hope, inseparable from a faith which is likewise absolute . . . appears as a response of the creature to the infinite Being to whom it is conscious of owing everything that it has . . . From the moment that I abase myself in some sense before the absolute Thou who in his infinite condescension has brought me forth out of nothingness, it seems as though I forbid myself ever again to despair, or, more exactly, that I implicitly accept the possibility of despair as an indication of treason, so that I could not give way to it without pronouncing my own condemnation. Indeed, seen in this perspective, what is the meaning of despair if not a declaration that God has withdrawn himself from me? In addition to the fact that such an accusation is incompatible with the nature of the absolute Thou, it is to be observed that in advancing it I am unwarrantably attributing to myself a distinct reality which I do not possess.<sup>57</sup>

Hope, thus, is a free response (*disponibilité*) to trust and to participate in the divine presence of the absolute Thou who revealed Himself in human existence. The hope for the “us” amidst the reality of despair and death can only be found in the eternal presence of “Thee,” the absolute Thou. God alone can make this hope a reality. Marcel explains,

Once again we are led to draw attention to the indissoluble connection which binds together love and hope. The more egoistical love is, the more the alluringly prophetic declaration it inspires, should be regarded with a caution as likely to be literally contradicted by experience; on the other hand, the nearer it approaches to true charity, the more the meaning of its declaration is inflected and tends to become full of an unconditional quality which is the

---

<sup>56</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 42.

<sup>57</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 46-47.



very sign of presence. This presence is incarnated in the 'us' for whom 'I hope in Thee,' that is to say in a communion of which I proclaim the indestructibility.<sup>58</sup>

In the end, God the Absolute Thou is that hope that confirms and secures the oneness of every I-thou relationship—a communion in love that endures and cannot be fleeting. Anthony Padovano puts it nicely,

Because I trust Being, I come to trust myself and my fellow man. I am filled with hope, knowing that I am worthwhile and that life is good. Hope enables me to see that I have a purpose and a mission, that the substance of my life will benefit my fellow man and please God. In hope I enter into deep communion with those about me. In hope, I find Being and rely upon God.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

The notion of God in Marcel's philosophy is always situated in the question of *who* rather than *what*. God is the Absolute *Thou*. He is beyond the objectifying grip of the *problematic* view of reality. He is rightly seen as the outlook of *mystery* and approached only through secondary reflection precisely because He is a *Thou*, a Person, a Presence who can only be participated in through His ever present manifestation in the community of love, faith, and, hope. Thus, how is God, the Absolute Thou affirmed in the world, according to Marcel? The Absolute Thou can only be affirmed in the community of love where persons are faithful to each other and that is possible through their faith in God whom they hope for the perpetuation of their love. God, the Absolute Thou, is recognizable in the human existence and can be experience only through faith and hope. Marcel states, "When we speak of God it is not of God that we speak."<sup>60</sup> That is to say, God is not an item of information or a concept to be spoken *about*, but as a Thou, a Person to be invoked and participated.

---

<sup>58</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 66.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Manimala, *Being, Person, and Community*, 170. See also Lescoe, *Existentialism*, 115-116.

<sup>60</sup> Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, 36.



The Absolute Thou is the Alpha and Omega and the only Ultimate Resort for humankind.



## CHAPTER 7

### CORRELATION: ABSOLUTE THOU AS THE GROUND OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF GABRIEL MARCEL

Using the correlational method, the researcher sought to show in this chapter that the Absolute Thou is the ground of intersubjectivity in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel on the level of *exigence of being* and through the pillars of intersubjectivity: love, fidelity, and hope. The following considerations should be met to show the correlation between intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou in Marcel's philosophy: the points of connection between intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou and their logical interdependence.

#### **Absolute Thou Grounds Intersubjectivity in the Level of the Exigence of Being**

The first task is to show that the Absolute Thou is the ground of intersubjectivity on the level of *exigence of being*. Briefly, Marcel's philosophy is often inclined into opposing poles of individual and universal (finite and the infinite, or physical and the spiritual).<sup>1</sup> But out of the said opposing poles emerges a mediating synthesis, as M. Aloysius Schandenbrand puts it, the "concrete universal."<sup>2</sup> This mediating synthesis arises from Marcel's concrete ontology where intersubjective communion of persons in love is realizable. How Marcel reconciles these two opposing poles in his existential ontology will be shown.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Existential Background of Human Dignity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> M. Aloysius Schandenbrand explains that this mediating synthesis of concrete universality arises not in the Hegelian way, but from intersubjectivity. M. Aloysius Schandenbrand, "Gabriel Marcel: Philosopher of Intersubjectivity," in John K. Ryan K. ed. *Twentieth-Century Thinkers: Studies in the Work of Seventeen Modern Philosophers* (New York: Alba House, 1965), 107.



At the outset of Marcel's thought it must be stated that both notions of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou renounce objectification and abstraction as they are not in the realm of the *problem*, hence, they cannot be approached by primary reflection. It was shown, however, that intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou basically belongs to the realm of *mystery* and, thus, they can only be approached through secondary reflection. Both intersubjectivity and Absolute Thou, therefore, cannot be reached through abstraction, logical demonstration, but can only be invoked or participated in through the depth of human experience.

As such, Marcel's concrete philosophy of existence, which puts accent on the lived experiences of human persons as situated in the world, is oriented towards *being*—where the whole human dimension is revealed. His concrete ontology is based on his concrete philosophy wherein human persons are understood as participants in the mystery of *being*. *Being* cannot be reached through thought that employs deductive argumentation or judgment or analogy.<sup>3</sup> Thus, Marcel holds that *being* is manifested only through one's personal encounter with others in the world. As Keen states, "Being is not revealed at the end of a process of judgment, deduction, or analogy but is mediated through our encounters with individual beings as they become present to us in love. Love, not knowledge, leads us to being."<sup>4</sup> In other words, *being* is revealed in *mystery* and in

---

<sup>3</sup> Here Marcel rejects the idealistic thinking which holds the "principle of identity"—this view conceives being as *ens realissimum*, that is, with a definite, thinkable, absolute life or structure. In short, that is to see being as object. Marcel, on the contrary, thinks that being transcends thought which means that being cannot be deduced from the structure of thought. See Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. Katharine Farrer (Westminster, UK: Dacre Press, 1949), 36. See also Sam Keen's discussion, "The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel's Thought," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17 (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984), 102.

<sup>4</sup> Keen, "The Development of the Idea of Being," 102.



intersubjectivity or I-thou relationship. Hence, Marcel says that “intersubjectivity . . . is the cornerstone of concrete ontology.”<sup>5</sup>

The question of *being* reveals the multi-dimensional aspects of reality that human nature characterizes not only a single dimension such as the physical world but also the spiritual or transcendental dimension<sup>6</sup> wherein the *exigence of being*, a deep-rooted interior hunger for fullness in the *broken world*, is met and fulfilled. Herein, Marcel rejects the separation between the physical world and the spiritual world or the individual and the universal. That is to say, in Marcel, the spiritual is manifested in the physical. Central to the understanding of this union of such two dimensions are human persons who are revealed in the realm of mystery and in *being*.

Marcel’s philosophy of existence accents human persons because it is only through them that *being* can be approached. Hence, *being* and human persons are inseparable as it is only in *being* that human persons are revealed. The notion of *exigence of being* elucidates this. For instance, the ontological or metaphysical question, “Who am I?”, inextricably involves both the questioner and *being*. As Marcel states, “to raise the ontological problem is to raise the question of being as a whole and of oneself seen as a

---

<sup>5</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 2, *Faith and Reality*, trans. René Hague, (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 170. In his Gifford Lectures Marcel speaks of intersubjectivity as the starting point of ontology: “Two things seem to me to be of importance. First we must understand that this enquiry can be developed only if we take a certain fullness of life as our starting point; secondly, we must at the same time note well that this fullness of life can in no circumstances be that of my own personal experience considered in an exclusively private aspect, considered in as much as it is *just mine*; rather it must be that of a whole which is implied by the relation to the *with*, by the *togetherness* . . .” See also *Mystery of Being*, 2:8.

<sup>6</sup> This is agreeable to Wesleyan Tradition’s understanding of human persons. John Wesley (1703-1791), an Anglican Evangelist and founder of the Wesleyan Tradition, interprets human person as created in the *imago Dei* constituting both material and physical dimensions. See Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, *The Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972), 106.



totality.”<sup>7</sup> The only way to approach *being* is through human persons who inquire about *being*. In this way, the only deepest ontological or metaphysical question, according to Marcel, is the question of “Who am I?” And for Marcel, this *exigence of being* is basically an appeal to the foundation of *being*, the Absolute Thou who alone can answer who human persons really are. Marcel elaborates, “I am led to recognise that the appeal is possible only because deep down in me there is something other than me, something further within me than I am myself—and at once the appeal changes its index.”<sup>8</sup> Here the idea of otherness in Marcel’s thought emerges again. The question, “who am I” presupposes not only other persons, but also God, the Absolute Thou as the necessary fulfillment of the former.

The otherness revealed in the ontological question elucidates further the inextricability of the physical realm and the spiritual realm. The relationship between question and answer, the *exigence* and fulfillment wherein each presupposes the other profoundly shows the serious need of the Absolute Thou in human existence. As such, to Marcel, the *exigence of being* is a manifestation of the Absolute Thou in the world. Thus, as Keen observes, the *exigence of being* might be seen as a philosophical corollary to the Augustinian principle: “that one can only seek God because one already has *in some sense* found him. The hunger for *being* is possible only because there is a foretaste, the question of *being* only because there is some indication of an answer, and the quest for

---

<sup>7</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari (New York: The Citadel Press, 1956), 17. Also elsewhere Marcel states: “. . . I who ask questions about Being do not in the first place know either *if* I am nor *a fortiori* what I am. I do not even clearly know the meaning of the question ‘what am I?’ though I am obsessed by it. So we see the problem of Being here encroaching upon its own data, and being studied actually inside the subject who states it. In the process, it is denied (or transcended) as problem, and becomes metamorphosed to mystery.” See Marcel, *Being and Having*, 117.

<sup>8</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 125.



being only because there is blinded intuition.”<sup>9</sup> Hence, the *exigence of being* posits the necessity of the Absolute Thou in human persons’ existence. In the end, as Marcel disclosed it, the *exigence of being* is *exigence* for God, the Absolute Thou revealing its true face.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Keen, “The Development of the Idea of Being,” 107-108.

<sup>10</sup> Marcel’s notion of the *ontological exigence* or *exigence of being*, an intense hunger for fullness that is only found in God, the Absolute Thou is very close to Wesleyan Tradition’s understanding of the *imago Dei* or the Image of God. Wesley describes human persons as crowned with all capabilities to enjoy life and reflect their Creator. He says in his sermon “The General Deliverance”: “He [humankind] was, after the likeness of his Creator, endued with understanding; a capacity of apprehending whatever objects were brought before it, and of judging concerning them. He was endued with a will, exerting itself in various affections and passions: And, lastly, with liberty, or freedom of choice; without which all the rest would have been in vain, and he would have been no more capable of serving his Creator than a piece of earth or marble; he would have been as incapable of vice or virtue, as any part of the inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted.” See John Wesley, “The General Deliverance,” in *Sermon on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), 470. See also Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), *Works*, “Image of God,” 4:293-295. Furthermore, Wesley believes that human persons can grow in the fullness of God. He remarks that human persons are creatures who are: “*capable of God*; capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. And, in fact, he [they] did know God, did unfeignedly love and uniformly obey him. This was the supreme perfection of man (as it is of all intelligent beings) the continually seeing, and loving, and obeying the Father of the spirits of all flesh. From this right state and right use of all his [their] faculties, his [their] happiness naturally flowed.” See John Wesley, “The General Deliverance,” in *Sermon on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), 471, 476. See Wesley, “Image of God,” in Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons*, 4:293-295. At its core, Wesley conceives the image of God as a “living relationship called forth by divine grace,” writes Theodore Runyon. In other words, the Image of God is a “vocation” or “calling” to which human persons are called. See Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 13. Also emphasizes by Michael Lodahl, a theologian of the Church of the Nazarene. The Image of God in the Wesleyan Tradition Course, October 29-November 9 2012. See also handout on Wesleyan Theology Conference: “Humanity in God’s Image and the Future of Creation: A Critical Retrieval of John Wesley’s “The General Spread of the Gospel.” November 10, 2012, Asia Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary Taytay, Rizal, Philippines. God whose very nature is holy love frames Wesley’s view of human persons. Wesley’s sermons: “The Image of God,” See Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 3:559-563. Sermon 128: John Wesley, “Free Grace,” in *Sermon on Several Occasions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), 883-891; “Unity of the Divine Being,” in *Sermon on Several Occasions*, 814-819. Hymns written by his brother Charles Wesley: “Universal Redemption,” “And Can It Be,” “Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown,” and “Love Divine.” Among many Wesleyan theologians who have full discussion on Wesley’s view on God as holy love, see Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), chapter 1; Wynkoop’s, *Theology of Love*, chapter 6; Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), chapter 2. The relational God shares Himself with human persons and all His creation. Human persons, then, are not to be conceived as persons *in themselves*, but rightly as persons fundamentally in relationship *with* others. It is because human persons are not merely physical beings but also spiritual beings that they are capable of participating in God. It is because they are not merely objects but persons who can respond through grace that they can be transformed. It is in this



Gerber elaborates Marcel's otherness posited in the *exigence of being*. He gives three reasons<sup>11</sup> why God the Absolute Thou is the necessary explanation to human persons: first, human thought is inadequate in explaining the question, "Who am I?"; second, the mutual relationship and dependence among human persons attest a foundation of personal fulfillment which is not itself inherent and dependent on either, but outside of themselves; and third, human personality reflects the personality of an Absolute Thou as the source of earthly personalities. As Marcel reasons, "it is impossible to think of personality or the personal order without at the same time thinking of that which reaches beyond them both, a supra-personal reality, presiding over all their initiative, which is both their beginning and their end."<sup>12</sup> Dennis Kinlaw concurs and supports Marcel by saying that human persons are essentially what he calls *other-oriented* and thus find their fulfillment outside of themselves. In his book *Let's Start With Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology*, Kinlaw elaborates,

*No human person is self-originating.* The choice to bring each of us into existence was made by two other people, so our life is a gift from others. We begin our life in another.

*No human person is ever self-sustaining.* We live by that which is not from within us. First, we draw our life from our mother; then we live from our mother's milk; we ultimately live from the bounty of nature, whose elements and richness we take into ourselves, including food, water, oxygen, friendship, encouragement, and inspiration.

*No person is self-explanatory.* There is no such thing as a typical human being. We come in two editions, and two who are different from each other are needed to explain any one of us. The male finds his definition in relation to the female, just as the female finds her identity in terms of differentiation from her sexual opposite. Our biology insists that our completion is in another. Each of us is made

---

participation or relationship with their Creator that human persons find their true being, dignity as humans, and fulfillment.

<sup>11</sup> For a fuller discussion, see Rudolph J. Gerber, "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics," *Philosophy Today* 12 (Winter 1968): 277-278.

<sup>12</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*, trans. Emma Crawford (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), 26.



for another who is distinct and different.<sup>13</sup>

It is for this incompleteness of the nature of human persons that they are not self-fulfilling. As Kinlaw is quick to add, “that we are by definition made for love as that gives itself in trust.”<sup>14</sup> Kinlaw moves on to assert, “We need to know the model from which our personal nature was drawn if we are to find out who we are. That model is the triune Godhead.”<sup>15</sup>

In the final analysis, the *exigence of being* reveals the greatest need of human persons—the *exigence* of the fullness of God—a fulfillment in life that brings meaning, value, and healing to the *broken world*. Because the Absolute Thou is in the realm of mystery and can only be approached through secondary reflection that God is not an information to be talked *about*, but rather that God is a Person, and an absolute Presence. Thus, God can only be invoked and participated in. Hence, the fulfillment of the *exigence* of the fullness of God is only realizable through participation in the Absolute Thou.<sup>16</sup> Thus, at this juncture, it should be clear that there is a reasonable connection and grounding of intersubjectivity in the Absolute Thou in Marcel’s philosophy. The deepest quest of understanding oneself and others—the pursuit for fullness is only answered and fulfilled by the Absolute Thou. This *exigence* of the fullness of God the Absolute Thou is further shown in the context of love, fidelity, and hope.

---

<sup>13</sup> Dennis F. Kinlaw, *Let’s Start With Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 101.

<sup>14</sup> Kinlaw, *Let’s Start With Jesus*, 101.

<sup>15</sup> Kinlaw, *Let’s Start With Jesus*, 78. Kinlaw advances the thought of Marcel here in pointing to the Trinity. This idea is shown below in the level of intersubjectivity as charity or agape.

<sup>16</sup> This idea of participation in the Absolute Thou is further explained below where the pillars of intersubjectivity: love, fidelity, and hope are discussed.



### **Absolute Thou Grounds Intersubjectivity on the Level of Love, Fidelity, and Hope<sup>17</sup>**

The second and final task is to show how the Absolute Thou is the ground of intersubjectivity through love, faith, and hope—where the *exigence of being*, the need of the fullness of God the Absolute Thou is attained. To demonstrate this, the following specific questions need to be answered. What is the connection of the three pillars of intersubjectivity, love, fidelity, and hope to God the Absolute Thou? What is it in love, fidelity, and hope that necessitates the Absolute Thou? What is it in God the Absolute Thou that serves as guiding principles of love, fidelity, and hope?

The first clue between intersubjectivity's pillars, love, fidelity, and hope, and the Absolute Thou is the element of *unconditionality* characterized by the three pillars. Each pillar is discussed separately to show each pillar's corresponding guiding principle. The last part shows the three pillars in triadic relationship with each other.

#### **Agape as the Guiding Principle of Love**

The unconditional demand of love in an I-thou relationship gives hint to the source of meaning and fulfillment to human love. A vow made, for instance, in a wedding ceremony implies unconditionality if it is meant to be genuine, meaningful and perpetual, "I shall continue to love you no matter what happens; . . . for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part." However, the unconditionality of a vow in a purely humanistic setting is unrealizable. The fact that betrayal of commitment is a human possibility proves that human persons themselves cannot be the foundation of their love and unconditional vow. More so, just like the I, the other is subject to death, hence, this shows a limitation that

---

<sup>17</sup> See table at the Appendix for illustration.



inspires an element of dissatisfaction in human love. As Donald McCarthy expresses this way,

. . . when the love of a human thou gives me personal meaning myself, his love does not reach the very depths of my own empirical self to know me completely as I really am. It remains a particular love, limited in itself, but tending, as my love does also, to a universal communion which obviously exceeds the natural power of any creature whatsoever. Moreover, isn't this other person also subject, like myself, to death? What will become of our communion unless it is founded on a more profound *Being*?<sup>18</sup>

Hence, Marcel proceeds to say that an unconditional vow must be grounded on an infinite reality, God the Absolute Thou, "a being that can assure me that my loved one will always be worthy of my love and that I can always be assisted to be faithful to my commitment."<sup>19</sup> Herein is the core of Marcel's argument, that the unconditional love presupposed in I-thou relationship finds justification and consummation on the level of agape or charity. That is to say, charity or agape is the guiding principle of I-thou relationship. Marcel elaborates,

The more egoistical love is, the more the alluringly prophetic declaration it inspires, should be regarded with a caution as likely to be literally contradicted by experience; on the other hand, *the nearer it approaches to true charity, the more the meaning of its declaration is inflected and tends to become full of an unconditional quality which is the very sign of presence.*<sup>20</sup>

As such, charity or agape, the love of God the Absolute Thou, for Marcel, is inextricable from the love of intersubjectivity or I-thou relationship. That is to say, the

---

<sup>18</sup> Donald McCarthy, "Marcel's Absolute Thou," *Philosophy Today* 10 (Fall 1966): 178.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas C. Anderson, *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's Mystery of Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006), 169.

<sup>20</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 66. Italics added. Also, Marcel explicates: "It is the dawn of what I have called inter-subjectivity, that is to say, mutual openness. It would be useful to show that this cannot be conveyed in strictly relational language; for from the moment we become *presentially* aware of one another, we can no longer be considered as two terms external to one another. We are on the verge of becoming interior to one another. But of course this interiority is only fully realized, that is to say, effected in LOVE or more precisely in true *AGAPE*." Gabriel Marcel, "Some Reflections on Existentialism," *Philosophy Today* 8 (1964): 255.



love of God and the love of human persons are inextricable for the former is the foundation of the latter. In this way, Marcel affirms the two inseparable greatest commandments of the Torah and of the Bible in which the first is the basis of the second, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind;’ ” and “ ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’ ” (Matthew 22:37, 39 New International Version; Deuteronomy 6:6 and Leviticus 19:18). Thus, for Marcel, love of neighbors and of creation is the expressions of one’s love to the Creator. In Marcel, it is in the relationship with others and the world that God is glorified. As he states, “My deepest and unshakable conviction . . . is not God’s will at all to be loved by us *against* the Creation, but rather glorified *through* the Creation and with the Creation as our starting-point.”<sup>21</sup> Hence, with charity or agape as a guiding principle of the I-thou relationship, human persons can give a valuable contribution to the community. That is, as Marcel stresses, “by the radiance of charity and love shining from their being, they add a positive contribution to the invisible work which gives the human adventure the only meaning which can justify it.”<sup>22</sup>

In a fascinating conversation with his foremost student Paul Ricoeur, Marcel speaks movingly about intersubjectivity whose true nature is charity or agape,

By “life” I mean life with others, reflection about others, about personal relationships, about intersubjectivity, which perhaps we haven’t talked enough about and which is nonetheless so essential to me. I think it could be said here that intersubjectivity is openness to the other, an openness which is perpetually threatened because at every moment the self may close itself again and become a prisoner of itself, no longer considering the other except in relation to itself. *But the possibility of opening to others (that is, in completely different language, charity) is clearly one of the key certitudes I have come to. I think that it is on the*

---

<sup>21</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 135.

<sup>22</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:45.



*level of agape, on the level of charity or intersubjectivity, that experience undergoes a certain transformation in that it takes on the value of a test.*"<sup>23</sup>

Here emerges again a contrast between I-he/she/it relationship and I-thou relationship. As graphic as before, Marcel describes I-he/she/it relationship like a world where the "I" reigns and rules at the expense of others. It is a "broken world," a world that is void of love. It is the prison of the self. It is a poverty of the soul that spreads like leprosy, as Marcel describes. In Christian terms, as alluded to, it is sin, which John Wesley depicts as "chains of iron and fetters of brass. They are wounds wherewith the world, the flesh, and the devil, have gashed and mangled us all over. They are diseases that drink up our blood and spirits, that bring us down to the chambers of the grave. But considered . . . with regard to God, they are debts, immense and numberless."<sup>24</sup> Marcel's analysis of the I-he/she/it relationship affirms the universality of sin. However, the I-he/she/it relationship should be seen in the light of the biblical understanding of sin as its framework.<sup>25</sup>

Kinlaw's reflection on Marcel shows the connection of I-he/she/it relationship to the biblical understanding of sin. Kinlaw remarks that Marcel's "analysis of sin in that passage (to Ricoeur) is a broken relationship—interpersonally not just with the law. It is one person shuts himself off from another."<sup>26</sup> Kinlaw further elaborates how Marcel's

---

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 253-254. Italics added.

<sup>24</sup> Wesley, Sermon 26, "Upon our Lord's Sermons on the Mount," Discourse 6, in *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 218-219.

<sup>25</sup> This could only be followed by a full discussion of how biblical understanding of sin gives intelligible framework to Marcel's I-he/she/it relationship, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> Dennis F. Kinlaw, Skype Interview with the researcher, 1 August 2012.



thought on I-he/she/it relationship supports the biblical understanding of sin in the following elucidating passage in which he gives an interesting quote from Marcel,

Little wonder that Adam's world immediately went topsy-turvy. He himself was instantly diminished. Gabriel Marcel describes Adam's situation in philosophical terms: "The more exclusively it is I who exist, the less do I exist; and conversely, the more I free myself from the prison of ego-centrism, the more do I exist." He then describes the contrast: "The more my existence takes on the character of including others, the narrow becomes the gap which separates it from being; the more, in other words, I am."

If we shut ourselves off from God, we will diminish ourselves because we have separated ourselves from those holy things that originate in him alone and for which we were made. To separate ourselves from the Source and Center means to implode on ourselves. The only power that can save us from collapsing in on ourselves is the presence of the Holy One, which alone can free us from the resulting bondage. But when we shut ourselves off from him, we shut ourselves off from others. The key to all other relationships is found in our relationship to God. If we are not open to God, we cannot properly be open to others. We will treat others the way we treat God. We will use them for our own advantage, not relating to them in true openness and holy-love. Ends will become means and means will become ends.<sup>27</sup>

Marcel indicates that a solution or cure for the "broken world" or broken relationship ruined by the I-he/she/it relationship is found beyond the *problematic* thinking or on the purely human level. Unreservedly, Marcel points out that the transformation of the broken relationship only found place on the level of intersubjectivity or charity or agape. As Marcel asserts, outside intersubjectivity or charity it is "impossible to be open to others, to welcome him in the deepest sense of the word, and to become at the same time more accessible to oneself."<sup>28</sup> It is because of Marcel's centrality of love in the notion of intersubjectivity that Kinlaw made these

---

<sup>27</sup> Kinlaw, *Let's Start with Jesus*, 117.

<sup>28</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:10.



remarks, “Gabriel Marcel has confirmed my belief in the Trinity. He has confirmed my belief of Wesley’s entire teaching on entire Sanctification.”<sup>29</sup>

Thus, in his painstaking analysis of human nature, *exigence of being*, the broken world, and intersubjectivity or I-thou relationship, Marcel discovers a ground in which nothing goes higher than charity or agape. Wesley tries to elucidate this agapeic love that Marcel is grasping in his book, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, . . .

love is the highest gift of God; humble, gentle, patient love; that all visions, revelations, manifestations whatever, are little things compared to love . . . “It were well you should be thoroughly sensible of this, the heaven of heavens is love. *There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way.* And when you are asking others, ‘Have you received this or that blessing?’ if you mean anything but more love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more, but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians. [1 Cor. 13] You can go no higher than this, till you are carried into Abraham’s bosom.”<sup>30</sup>

Nothing can surpass the level of charity or agape—where transformation of I-he/she/it relationship to I-thou relationship is only possible—because to Wesley God is agape.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Dennis F. Kinlaw, Skype Interview with the researcher, 1 August 2012.

<sup>30</sup> John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 1971), 99.

<sup>31</sup> Kinlaw’s evaluation of the Swedish Protestant theologian Anders Nydren’s book, *Agape and Eros*, makes an elucidating clarification on the understanding of agape and eros. Like Nygren, he argues that the Christian concept of love as agape is a fundamental Christian motif and brings fundamental change to ethics and religion: “Consider ethics for instance. Ancient non Christian ethics were individualistic. This found expression in the search for the Highest Good, that which would in the fullest respect satisfy the individual. The goal was Eudaemonism, individual happiness. From this came Hedonism, perfection as realization of potential in Aristotle, and Stoicism. In the one the premium was the pleasure of the moment; in the second personal fulfillment, and in the third an indifference to the vicissitudes to life enabled on to transcend the emotions of the moment.

Christianity is different. It makes fellowship, communion, the starting point of ethical discussion. So God has to do with man in society, the family, the state, and the “City.” Here ‘*agape*’ enters for it is social idea. As to the Good, it turns us from eudaemonism and individualism to the question of “the Good-in-itself”. In religion the shift is from an egocentrism to a theocentrism. In the one man is religious out of self interest. So the concept of appeasement or the appeal to the magical continually appears. In Christianity in ‘*agape*’ the human finds fulfillment in a heterocentrism of *other-oriented love*.



In speaking of intersubjectivity as charity or agape, Marcel points to the heart of the Trinity. As George Maloney observes in his book, *Abiding in Indwelling in Trinity*, “Gabriel Marcel describes the mystery of true love in the Trinity and in our own human love relations: ‘The I is the child of the We.’”<sup>32</sup> In the same line of thought, Kinlaw comments that Marcel is prying to the doctrine of the Trinity which is the necessary model in which human nature finds its meaning and fulfillment.<sup>33</sup>

Marcel however does not fully elaborate agapeic love. This inadequacy in Marcel demands an in depth exploration of the triune Godhead who models agapeic love. But, perhaps to Marcel this is beyond philosophical reflection and is proper only for the theologians to discuss. One only needs to explore the context of the triune Godhead to see how the agapeic community in the three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) gives framework to intersubjective or interpersonal relationship, which is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, in showing that intersubjectivity is nothing but charity or agape,

---

The result is that in Christianity ethics and religion, which can be quite separate in other religions, become one. The religious answer is the same as the ethical. God, according to John, is love, and the Good itself, the supreme good, is the same, Christianity's own original basic conception.

But what of ‘eros’? We have a problem here because of our association of the term with the erotic. The reality though is that in Platonic thought the whole tendency of ‘eros’ was to seek to deliver the worshipper from the sensual. Plato does all in his power to separate the two. *Eros* longs to set the soul free from the sensual and the material and bind it to the supersensible, the heavenly world of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, the Divine. Thus in Plato it is a spiritualized form of ‘eros’ and that the sublimation of ‘eros’ that becomes the born rival of the idea of Agape. A mistake is made of representing ‘agape’ as a higher and more spiritualized form of ‘eros’ and that the sublimation of ‘eros’ is the way to reach *agape*. Heavenly ‘eros’ may be a sublimation of sensual love but it is not capable of further sublimation. ‘Agape’ stands alongside, not above, the heavenly *eros*, but the difference is not one of degree. It is a difference of kind. There is no way from ‘eros’ to ‘agape.’” Dennis F. Kinlaw, “Nygren on Agape and Eros.” Received via electronic mail on 1 August 2012.

He also adds: “The *difference* found in a “broken world” and in a Fallen world makes division, it maybe racial difference, it maybe political difference, it maybe social or educational whatsoever ... but not on an agapeic world, a world where the love of God reigns. Differences make for union. The differences between Adam and Eve as male and female that make possible divorce but it may also make possible the most intimate union that two subjects can ever have.” Article received from Dennis F. Kinlaw, 1 August 2012. Personal e.mail.

<sup>32</sup> George A. Maloney, *Abiding in Indwelling in Trinity* (NH: Paulist Press, 2004), 20.

<sup>33</sup> Dennis F. Kinlaw, Skype Interview with the researcher, 1 August 2012.



Marcel gives a sound basis that human nature and relationship cannot escape the infinite Being, God the Absolute Thou, the source, the ground, the symphony and bond of intersubjective relationship. Moreover, it is in this inherent orientation of human love to the agapeic love of God that he may be providing a key to help with some biblical and theological accounts.

### Faith as the Grounding Principle of Fidelity

The above discussion on love and agape gives a hint on the relationship between fidelity and faith because love and fidelity are inseparable.<sup>34</sup> And so just as love's unconditional demand has its full assurance in agape, fidelity's unconditionality is possible in faith. According to Marcel, hence, the unconditional demands or aspiration of fidelity is fully articulated in the religious faith. As Marcel holds, "Fidelity can never be unconditional except when it is Faith."<sup>35</sup> That is to say, such commitment reaches its best explanation when pledged to God the Absolute Thou.

Furthermore, Marcel says, "faith is essentially fidelity, and in the highest possible form."<sup>36</sup> But as Keen explains, "fidelity in human relationships is not something added to faith; it is the way in which the believer is faithful to the Absolute Thou."<sup>37</sup> Here emerges

---

<sup>34</sup> It is in that other-orientedness of love and it is grounded in the absolute Thou that love is extricable from faith. Marcel states, "love is faith itself, an invincible assurance based on Being itself. It is here and here alone that we reach not only an unconditioned fact but a rational unconditional as well; namely that of the absolute Thou, that which is expressed in the *Fiat voluntas tua* of the Lord's Prayer." See Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, trans. with an introduction by Robert Rosthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964), 136, 170. Marcel also writes: 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." See Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, Vol. 1, *Reflection and Mystery*, trans. G.S. Fraser (London: The Harvill Press, 1951), 62.

<sup>35</sup> Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 133.

<sup>36</sup> Marcel, *Being and Having*, 22.

<sup>37</sup> Keen, "The Development of the Idea of Being," 114.



again the inseparability of the vertical relationship (faith in God) from the horizontal relationship (fidelity to others). One's faith in God assures one's fidelity to others. As Marcel explains, "the more we shall put love at the center of our lives, the more certain we shall be that we act according to God's will."<sup>38</sup> Reversely, one's fidelity to others testifies to one's faith in God the Absolute Thou.

Thus, I-thou relationship or intersubjectivity, a community centered in the agapeic love continues to have coherence and unity through faith in God the Absolute Thou who is the living center of the relationship. As such, it is the Absolute Thou's presence recognized in the love of I-thou relationship that makes love perpetual and fulfilled. It is in faith that fidelity gets strength and constancy in the temporal plane and in the midst of uncertainties.

#### God the Absolute Thou and Hope

The second link of the grounding of intersubjectivity in the Absolute Thou is the *demand for eternity, the indestructibility of love*. Marcel's painstaking endeavor to find meaning to intersubjectivity or the I-thou relationship against the sting of death led him to discover the mediating synthesis, the unconditional hope in the ultimate resort, the Absolute Thou. Marcel has made it clear that this justification cannot be done on the level of thought alone; it must utterly include deep dimension of life if the justification is to be real and not merely an illusion.

As Marcel stresses, "thou, at least, shalt not die." This prophetic affirmation and assurance that death is not the cessation of love is the voice of hope that inspires the indestructibility of love that is mutually pledged. The voice of hope enclosed in the

---

<sup>38</sup> Marcel, "Theism and Personal Relationships," 40.



prophetic statement, “thou shalt not die” finds its meaning and justification in the statement, “I hope in *Thee* for us.” Notice that without the “Thee” at the center of the “I” and the “thou,” hope is groundless thus and entails the end of love. Hope, like love and fidelity, as already mentioned, is unsustainable in the finite “I” and the “thou” or “us” themselves. Hence, the hope for the “us,” this oneness in love of the “I” and the “thou” can only be found in the presence of “Thee,” the Absolute Thou, who is the living center of I-thou relationship. Thus, the eternal character enclosed in love refers back to God, the Absolute Thou who can only give meaning to the salvific character of hope. That is to say, the only justification for such a demand for eternity in love is God the Absolute Thou in Marcel’s philosophy.

Just as charity or agape is the guiding principle for love, faith for fidelity, so hope as inextricable from the Absolute Thou illuminates the true nature of hope. Hope as a radical openness, a recognition of one’s *exigence of being* as *exigence* of God, hence, testifies the centrality of God the Absolute Thou in human existence. And so, as Francis J. Lescoe remarks,

it is permanently through hope that I discover my relation to the Absolute Thou. Because I realize my complete dependence on this Infinite Being, I am forever protected from despair. I am not tortured by a Heideggerian dread and homelessness; neither am I overwhelmed by Sartre’s absurdity or nausea. I am, in truth, a *homo viator*, a pilgrim, a wayfarer but not a wanderer of endless and confusing ‘forest trail.’ I experience a nostalgia for Being and, therefore, I direct my gaze to another life where I shall experience the complete fulfillment.<sup>39</sup>

### Triadic Relationship of Love, Faith, and Hope

Each of the pillars of intersubjectivity reveals the triadic and inextricable relationship with each other as they all necessitate and have their being beyond the

---

<sup>39</sup> Francis J. Lescoe, *Existentialism With or Without God* (New York: Alba House, 1974), 112.



spatio-temporal dimension, God the Absolute Thou. The prophetic assurance of the eternity of love that lingers amidst the darkness of the “broken world,” of betrayal, sickness, separation, and slavery is earnestly faith and hope or trust in the power and goodness of God the Absolute Thou. As alluded to, hope inspires the characteristics of love and fidelity. Without hope, love and fidelity and faith are purposeless. Thus, hope as the life force behind love and fidelity and faith makes hope the final assurance of the grounding of intersubjectivity in the Absolute Thou in Marcel’s philosophy. Love and fidelity and faith are the unconditional assurance of the mutual oneness of the I-thou relationship with others and the Absolute Thou. Love as charity and fidelity is the antidote for egocentric living, alienation, detachment, pride, hypocrisy, betrayal, and the cure for the “broken world.” Hope, however, is the full assurance of the I-thou relationship’s mutual oneness not only in the “here are now” but also in the future. In other words, agape and faith are the full assurance of the unconditionality and indestructibility of love. Hope is the full assurance that this indestructibility transcends space and time.

Just as love and faith are inseparable in hoping for the indestructibility of the beloved in the Absolute Thou, so love as charity or agape in relation to hope is what makes hope not self-centered. Hope based on agape is always to hope for all of “us,” community, who participate in the journey according to Marcel.<sup>40</sup>

What faith does to hope, according to Marcel, is that it “gives to hope its intelligible framework.”<sup>41</sup> Faith in the Absolute Thou that gives intelligible framework to hope implies that life is a divine gift. As Marcel elaborates, “each of us is in a position to

---

<sup>40</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:171.

<sup>41</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:173.



recognize that his own essence is a gift—that is not a *datum*; that he himself is a gift and that he has no existence at all through himself.”<sup>42</sup> That life is a meaningful gift suggests that life has intrinsic worth and life has meaning and a future when the giver of life, God the Absolute Thou, is recognized with deep and wide openness through love, faith, and hope.

However, faith and hope without love begets no relationship at all, as intimate as I-thou. Love or intersubjectivity as agape breaks barriers, transforms, renews, builds a community, is unselfish, brings fullness, is irreducible, it aspires to be unconditional and eternal—all these set love as basic to fidelity, faith and hope. Intersubjectivity as agape speaks closely to the very nature of God, the Absolute Thou. And so as the I-thou relationship grows vertically in agapeic love the more it grows horizontally.

### **Conclusion**

God, the Absolute Thou, is the very essence of intersubjectivity or the I-thou relationship. It is because of the unconditional and eternal elements of intersubjectivity, which cannot sustain itself on its own that it has the source in God, the Absolute Thou. Just as the subject or person is enriched in the intersubjective relationship, so it finds its ultimate consummation of this intimacy in the union with God. It is only in the Absolute Thou, the living center and the ultimate ground of intersubjectivity, that life finds meaning, fulfillment, and eternal significance. Hence, that God the Absolute Thou is the fullness of human persons and the full assurance of the unconditionality and eternity of the I-thou relationship, which has been the core quest of this research endeavor, only

---

<sup>42</sup> Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, 2:173.



shows that God the Absolute Thou is the ground of intersubjectivity in the philosophy of Marcel. In the words of Kinlaw this may be better expressed,

Human love like all other created good derives from something greater than itself. It carries within itself overtones of that Greater from which it originates . . . it represents in itself that greatness from which it comes. It has a basis, a referent. That basis is in the creative will of God which enables God to use it as an illustration of His love for His people. But there is more. The basis lies ultimately in the very Being of that God who lives with an eternal love and can be called Love itself (Himself). There is then a divine ontological referent for this earthly reality which brings such joy to human life.

Human love is thus not first a human experience that helps us understand God. It is a personal experience that helps us relate joyously to one another. It is a joy we know because we are human. But it is not an earthly category that just happens to illustrate a divine reality. It is a human experience that images something eternal. It is part of what Scripture means by the *imago Dei*.

When this is realized, we see that it is a divine category with a human counterpart (image) which helps us understand ourselves. He who is love made us like Himself. He calls us to a relationship to Himself of an exclusive (monogamous) and an unending love. He has made us to relate to Him in that fashion and to find our ultimate fulfillment in that perfection of love. He has built into us a human need and a human experience that in counterpart symbolizes in a human relationship this ultimate personal experience with God. Thus a sanctity derives to human love from the sacredness of the reality which it images.<sup>43</sup>

Hence, it is in intersubjectivity, a journey where human and the divine meet harmoniously through love, fidelity, faith, and hope, which is a vocation in which human persons are called to participate. This journey is a journey of love with others through God, the Absolute Thou, whose very being is love.

---

<sup>43</sup> Dennis, F. Kinlaw, "Charles Williams' Concept of Imaging Applied to "The Song of Songs," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 91.



## CHAPTER 8

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

That human intersubjective relationship finds its point of reference in God, the Absolute Thou, has been the core argument of this research. To arrive at this objective, both expository and correlation methods were employed to understand the nature of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou and to show their reciprocal relationship.

Taking into account first the basic ontology of Marcel from which his notions of intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou spring, we sought to situate the polarity as well as the mediating synthesis of his two notions. His *mysterious* approach to reality, his most important contribution to metaphysical thinking, reveals the realm of *being* that elucidates the multi-dimensions of human persons, their *exigence of being* or greatest need for fullness, and as basic participants in the world, with others, and with God.

At the heart of Marcel's intersubjectivity are three inseparable basic units: love, fidelity and hope that characterize openness, community, unconditionality, and eternity. Love, fidelity and hope inescapably posit an absolute reality that can meet humans' greatest need and guarantee of personal relationship.

Marcel's notion of God, the Absolute Thou, is beyond all conceptualization and dependence. It does not mean transcending all possibility of human experience. His approach to God is non-objective, relational and experiential. The Absolute Thou is a personal Thou, a divine Presence, a God who is love, who has manifested Himself



through the depth of human experience. Human persons can experience the Absolute Thou only by way of faith, hope, and love that requires personal involvement.

Using the correlational method, the researcher located points of contact and logical interdependence between intersubjectivity and the Absolute Thou that led him to the following outcomes:

1. In the level of *exigence of being*—the Absolute Thou alone can fulfill human persons' deepest need for fullness. This experience of fullness is realizable through personal involvement in God, the Absolute Thou, by way of faith, love, and hope.

2. In the context of love, fidelity, and hope, God, the Absolute Thou, can only sustain the inherent demand for unconditionality and eternity in them. Hence, the demands for unconditionality and eternity are only realized when agape love or charity is involved as its guiding principle; fidelity takes faith as its guiding principle; and hope centers in hope in God, the Absolute Thou *alone*.

The researcher reached the conclusion that the Absolute Thou provides the ground of intersubjectivity in the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel.

## **Conclusions**

The following theses and insights are drawn from the investigations of the notions of intersubjectivity as grounded in the Absolute Thou in Marcel:

1. The ontology of Gabriel Marcel reveals the multi-dimensions of human persons' existence who are embodied in the world with basic orientation to the fullness of life that is only realized through personal involvement with others and God, the Absolute Thou.



2. God, the Absolute Thou, provides fulfillment of human persons' deepest need, the *exigence of being*.

3. Human persons are essentially *co-esse*, with others or intersubjective. Human persons are basic participants in the world. Such a given state of openness in human persons posits a reality of communal experiences arising from free and mutual responses.

4. Human intersubjective relationships find grounding in God, the Absolute Thou, through *exigence of being*, love, fidelity, and hope.

a. Love, fidelity, and hope are the pillars of Marcel's intersubjectivity. The concept that love is basic to fidelity and hope in Marcel's thinking is an insight that emerges from this study. Love, fidelity and hope in the human level do not exist solely in themselves, but find their point of reference and *being* outside themselves in God, the Absolute Thou.

b. The mediating connection of intersubjectivity (love, fidelity, and hope) and the Absolute Thou is the element of demand for unconditionality and *eternity* which are found in intersubjectivity: love, fidelity, and hope. The only being that can sustain and fulfill these demands is God, the Absolute Thou. Intersubjectivity finds its ground in the Absolute Thou when love takes charity or agape as its guiding principle; fidelity takes faith as its guiding principle, and hope originates in God, the Absolute Thou.

c. Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity is his exposition of love illustrated in the I-thou relationship, although Marcel used them synonymously. Intersubjectivity or the I-thou relationship is an intimate and dynamic community of *persons* that are knitted in love—who freely open and give themselves unselfishly and unconditionally to each other in a continuous personal intercourse. I-thou relationship is basically other-oriented love



that brings mutual growth and fullness of the communion that has eternal significance. Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity or the I-thou relationship is nothing other than charity or agape. His notion of intersubjectivity is his solution for the "broken world." This puts forward that love is central to the notion of intersubjectivity of Marcel, one of the core insights from this study.

d. Marcel's notion of intersubjectivity as agape inescapably points to the Trinity.

Marcel refers to intersubjectivity as agape that is inextricably of God, the Absolute Thou, however he did not elaborate it. This inadequacy in Marcel requires an exposition of the triune Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to show how the Trinity gives a basic framework to intersubjectivity.

e. The I-he/she/it relationship involves the lowest level of human relationships wherein persons encounter each other as objects and functions and remain locked into themselves as a result of self-centeredness and hunger for power, a situation which Marcel describes as the "poverty" and "leprosy" of the human soul. The I-he/she/it relationship breaks up authentic relationships and they are essentially the causative factors in the "broken world."

f. The I-he/she/it relationship validates the actuality of sin in the world. I-he/she/it relationship shares the same idea as biblical understanding of sin.

5. Gabriel Marcel's approach to God, the Absolute Thou, is non-objective, experiential, and relational—which deals primarily with human persons' deep concrete experiences like love, commitment, fidelity, and hope that are essentially oriented to the sacral dimension of life. Since God, the Absolute Thou, belongs to the realm of mystery,



He can be only approached through secondary reflection that involves personal participation in real life situation.

a. Marcel understands God, the Absolute Thou, as a God of love who is beyond all conceptualization and dependence, but it does not mean transcending all possibility of human experience. The Absolute Thou is a personal Thou, a divine Presence, who has manifested Himself through the depth of human experiences. Human persons can experience this Presence only by way of faith, hope, and love.

### **Recommendations**

The researcher observes that this study can serve as a springboard for future related studies:

1. Marcel's insights on intersubjectivity as love can be a stepping-stone to consider the centrality of love in Marcel's philosophy in a future study.

2. This research pointed some potential hints and connections between Marcel's philosophy and Wesley's theology. The researcher believes that the following topics are worthwhile endeavors to be considered:

a. A comparative study of Marcel's philosophy and Wesley's theology of personhood and its implication in the postmodern time.

b. Establishing the commonalities and differences of Marcel's notion of I-he/she/it and the Wesley's understanding of sin.

c. Establishing the commonalities and differences of Marcel's intersubjectivity and Entire Sanctification and Perfect Love in Wesley.

d. How the triune Godhead, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, gives a framework to the notion of intersubjectivity in Marcel.



e. Establishing the commonalities and differences of Marcel's notion of *exigence of being* and Wesleyan understanding of *imago Dei*. Marcel's notion of *exigence of being* agrees with Wesley's understanding of the Image of God. They agree on the idea that human persons are "capable of God," to use John Wesley's words, and *exigence of being* embodies a vocation lived out in the world and with others.

f. Establishing the commonalities and differences of Marcel's notion of God, the Absolute Thou as love and capable of being experienced and with the Wesleyan understanding of God as love.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

Marcel, Gabriel. *A Gabriel Marcel Reader*. Ed. Brendan Sweetman. South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Awakenings Gabriel Marcel: A Translation of Marcel's Autobiography by Peter S. Rogers*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Being and Having*. Translated by Katharine Farrer. Westminster, UK: Dacre Press, 1949.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Creative Fidelity*. Translated by Robert Rosthal. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1964.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope*. Translated by Emma Crawford. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Man Against Mass Society*. Translated by G.S. Fraser. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Metaphysical Journal*. Translated by Bernard Wall. London: Rockliff, 1952.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Problematic Man*. Translated by Brian Thompson. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Reply to John D. Glenn, Jr." in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Searchings*. New York: Newman Press, 1967.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 1: *Reflection and Mystery*. Translated by G.S. London: The Harvill Press, 1951.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Mystery of Being*, vol. 2: *Faith and Reality*. Translated by René Hague. London: The Harvill Press, 1951.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Philosophy of Existence*. Translated by Manya Harari. New York: Philosophical, 1949.



\_\_\_\_\_. *The Philosophy of Existentialism*. Translated by Manya Harari. New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*. Translated by Stephen Jolin and Peter Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973.

### Secondary Sources

Anderson, Thomas C. *A Commentary on Gabriel Marcel's The Mystery of Being*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2006.

Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*, vol. 1: *Questions 2*. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Westminster, MD: Christian Classic, 1948.

Aureada, Jose Antonio E. *Thesis Writing for Theology Students: A Primer*. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2009.

Batoon, Emmanuel D. *A Guide to Thesis Writing in Philosophy Part 1. Proposal Writing*. Manila: Rejn Publishing, 2005.

Bell, Judith. *Doing Your Research Project*. Second ed. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1993.

Blackburn, Simon. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Buber, Martin. *Between Man and Man*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947.

Buber, Martin. *I and Thou*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.

Bugbee, Henry G. "L'Exigence Ontologique," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.

Cain, Seymour. *Gabriel Marcel*. New York: Hillary House, 1963.

\_\_\_\_\_. Seymour. *Gabriel Marcel's Religious Experience*. New York: Peter Lang Inc., 1995.

Casserley, J.V. Langmead. "Gabriel Marcel," in Carl Michalson, ed., *Christianity and the Existentialists*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956.

Collins, James. *The Existentialists*. Chicago : Henry Regnery Co., 1952.



- Collins, Kenneth J. *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.
- Coppedge, Allan. *The God who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Crossley, Nick. *Intersubjectivity: The Fabric of Social Becoming*. London: Sage Publications, 1996.
- Cruz, Corazon L. *Philosophy of Man*. Manila: National Book Store, 1987.
- Dawkins, Richard. *The God Delusion*. London: Bantam Press, 2006.
- Desmond, William. "Philosophy of Religion: Marcel, Jaspers, Levinas." In Routledge, *History of Philosophy*, 110.
- Diamond, Malcolm L. *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1960.
- Dy, Manuel B. Jr. *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings*. Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986.
- Gallagher, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1963.
- Glenn, John D. Jr., "Marcel and Sartre: The Philosophy of Communion and the Philosophy of Alienation," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.
- Grenz, Stanley. *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962.
- Hick, John H. ed., *Classical Contemporary Readings in Philosophy of Religion*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Inc., 1970.
- Kaufmann, Walter. Ed. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956.
- Kinlaw, Dennis. *Let's Start With Jesus: A New Way of Doing Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.



- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mind of Christ*. Anderson: Francis Asbury Press, 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *This Day with the Master: 365 Daily Meditation*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.
- Keen, Sam, *Gabriel Marcel*. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Development of the Idea of Being in Marcel's Thought," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds. *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.
- Leeuwen, T.M. *The Surplus of Meaning: Ontology and Eschatology in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1981.
- Lescoe, Francis J. *Existentialism With or Without God*. New York: Alba House, 1974.
- Long, Eugene Thomas. *Twentieth-Century Western Philosophy of Religion 1900-2000*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000.
- Maddox, Randy L. *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology*. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994.
- Maloney, George A. *Abiding in Indwelling in Trinity*. NH: Paulist Press, 2004.
- Manimala, V.J. *Being, Person, and Community: A Study of Intersubjectivity in Existentialism with Special Reference to Marcel, Sartre and the Concept of Sangha in Buddhism*. New Delhi: Intercultural Publications, 1991.
- Miceli, Vincent. *Ascent to Being: Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion*. Foreword by Gabriel Marcel. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1965.
- Michalson, Carl. *Christianity and the Existentialist*. New York: Charles Scribner's and Son, 1956.
- O'Malley, John B. *The Fellowship of Being: An Essay on the Concept of Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966.
- Outler, Albert C., ed. *The Works of John Wesley. The Sermons*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986.
- Pax, Clyde. *An Existential Approach to God: A Study of Gabriel Marcel*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972.
- Reinhardt, Kurt Frank. *The Existentialist Revolt: The Main Theories and Phases of Existentialism*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1952.



- Robert, David E. *Existentialism and Religious Belief*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957.
- Ryan, John K. Ed. *Twentieth-Century Thinkers: Studies in the Work of Seventeen Modern Philosophers*. Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1965.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel E. Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.
- Staples, Rob L. *Words of Faith: An Easy Reference to Theological Terms*. Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 2001.
- Schaldenbrand, M. Aloysius "Gabriel Marcel: Philosopher of Intersubjectivity," in Ryan, John K. Ed. *Twentieth-Century Thinkers: Studies in the Work of Seventeen Modern Philosophers*. Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1965. 107-130.
- Schilpp, Paul A. and Lewis E. Hahn. Eds. *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.
- Spier, J.M. *Christianity and Existentialism*. Translated by David Hugh Freeman. Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1953.
- Straus, Erwin W. and Michael A. Machado. "Gabriel Marcel's Notion of Incarnate Being," in Paul A. Schilpp and Lewis E. Hahn, eds., *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Library of Living Philosophers, Volume 17. La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1984.
- Stults, Donald Leroy. *Developing Asian Evangelical Theology*. Manila: OM Literature, 1989.
- Sweetman, Brendan. *The Vision of Gabriel Marcel: Epistemology, Human Person, the Transcendent*. New York: Rodopi, 2008.
- Tillich, Paul. *Systematic Theology*. New York: Harper and Row Publisher, 1967.
- Titus, Harold H., Marilyn S. Smith, and Richard T. Nolan. *Living Issues in Philosophy*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1979.
- van Ewijk, Thomas J.M. *Gabriel Marcel: An Introduction*. Translated by Matthew J. van Velzen. New York: Paulist Press, 1965.
- Wesley, John. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Kansas: Beacon Hill Press, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sermon on Several Occasions*. Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.



Wynkoop, Mildred Bangs. *The Theology of Love: The Dynamic of Wesleyanism*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1972.

Zacharias, Ravi. *Can Man Live without God*. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994.

### Articles

Adams, Pedro. "Marcel: Metaphysician or Moralist." *Philosophy Today* (Fall 1964): 182-189.

Anderson, Thomas. "Gabriel Marcel's Notions of Being." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 29-49.

Aloysius, Mary. "Freedom and the I: An Existential Inquiry." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 3 (1963): 580-599.

Baraceros, Esther L. "State of Oblivion through Technology," *Philippine Panorama*, 19 (August 2012): 18-21.

Bertman, Martin A. "Gabriel Marcel on Hope." *Philosophy Today*, 14 (1970): 101-105.

Bourgeois, Patrick. "Catholic Author, Musician, Philosopher: Gabriel Marcel in Postmodern Dialogue." *Renascence* 55 (Spring 2003): 193-208.

Bush, Thomas. "Gabriel Marcel: An Overview and Assessment." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 4-11.

Clark, Gary. "God and Experience: Rejuvenation-Hope-Participation." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 68-75.

Dy, Manuel B. Jr., "Ang Pilosopiya ng Buhay ni Gabriel Marcel, Hango sa Kanyang Pag-uusap Kay Paul Ricoeur." *Karunungan* 6 (1989).

Dy, Manuel B. Jr., "From Fidelity to Faith: A Marcelian Approach," in *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings* (Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986).

Etienne, Gilson. "A Unique Philosopher." *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 278-281.

Flam, Leopold. "The Desacralization in Contemporary Thought." *Philosophy Today* 7 (Fall 1963): 209-215.

Garcia, Leni R. "In search of Meaning: Marcelian Phenomenological Approach to a Study of the Protagonists in Two Stories." *Sophia* 24 (1994-1995): 47-62.



- Gerber, Rudolph J. "Marcel and the Experiential Road to Metaphysics." *Philosophy Today* 12 (Winter 1968): 262-281.
- Gilson, Etienne. "A Unique Philosopher." *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 278-281.
- Guillemine, De Lacoste "The Notion of Participation in the Early Drama and Early Journals of Gabriel Marcel." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 50-60.
- Hanley, Rudolph R. "Causality and Atheism: The Difficulty with the Creative God in Existential Phenomenology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 44 (1970): 232-240.
- Hocking, W.E. "Marcel and the Ground Issues of Metaphysics." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (1954): 439-69.
- Ibana, Rainer. "A Neo-Thomistic Presentation of Gabriel Marcel's Metaphysics of Participation." *Unitas* 58 (September 1985): 246-260.
- Ibanez-Noe, Javier A. "Truth and Ethos: The Philosophical Foundations of Nietzsche's Ethics." *Philosophy Today* 38 (Spring 1994): 56-73.
- Kinlaw, Dennis, F. "Charles Williams' Concept of Imaging Applied to 'The Song of Songs.'" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 85-92.
- Kreyche, Gerald F. "Gabriel Marcel and the Contemporary Scene." *Philosophy Today* 8 (Winter 1964): 246-247.
- Lenchner, R. "For Gabriel Marcel from Philosophy Today." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 2.
- Luther, Arthur. "Metaphysics of the We Are." *Philosophy Today* 8 (Fall 1964): 190-203.
- Marcel, Gabriel. "Sacred in the Technological Age." *Theology Today* 19 (1962): 28-38.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Some Reflections on Existentialism." *Philosophy Today* 8 (1964): 248-257.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "What Can we Expect of Philosophy." *Philosophy Today* 3 (Winter 1959): 252-261.
- McCarthy, Donald. "Marcel's Absolute Thou." *Philosophy Today* 10 (Fall 1966): 175-181.
- Michaud, Thomas A. "Secondary Reflection and Marcelian Anthropology."



*Philosophy Today* (Fall 1990): 222-228.

Parain-Vial, Jeanne. "Notes on the Ontology of Gabriel Marcel." *Philosophy Today* 4 (Winter 1960): 281.

Pax, Clyde. "Marcel's Way of Creative Fidelity." *Philosophy Today* 19 (Spring 1975): 12-21.

O'Hara, M. Kevin. "Person in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel." *Philosophy Today* 8 (Fall 1964): 147-154.

Reed, Teresa. "Aspects of Marcel's Essays." *Renascence* 55 (Spring 2003): 211-277.

Ricoeur, Paul. "My Relation to the History of Philosophy." *The Hijf Review* 35 (1978): 5-12.

Sunico, Ramon Vicente. "Reading Marcel: 3 Easy Pieces for Beginners" in Manuel B. Dy, Jr. *Philosophy of Man: Selected Readings*. Manila: Goodwilling Trading Corporation, 1986.

Trinidad, Jun. "Gabriel Marcel: An Existentialist's Phenomenology of Being." *Sophia* 20 (September-December 1990): 69-84.

Zuidema, S. U. "Gabriel Marcel: A Critique." *Philosophy Today* 4 (1960): 283-288.

### **Thesis/Dissertation**

Bebefield, J.J. "The Place of God in the Thought of Gabriel Marcel." Ph.D. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1973.

Mendoza-Pacheco, Esther, "Being-For Others in the J.P. Sartre and G. Marcel: A Comparative Study." M.A. thesis, Saint Louis University 1971.

Muller, Maria Cecilia G. "A Critical Analysis of the Meaning of Human Existence in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel." M.A. thesis, Saint Louis University, 1969.

Villaneva, Rebecca G. "Gabriel Marcel on Creative Fidelity." M.A. thesis, Ateneo de Manila University, 1979.

### **Online Articles**

Azzopardi, Salvino. "Proving the Existence of God" *Dialogue and Alliance* 6 (Spring 1992): Available from:



<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=119&sid=5b1f8261-68bc-4d75-a9c0-7770d42f56b6%40sessionmgr110>, accessed: 28 June 2011.

Craig, William Lane. "The Absurdity of Life without God," *Reasonable Faith*.

Available from

<http://www.reasonablefaith.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5389>, accessed 29 July 2011.

Fincher, Dale. "Questions Asked: "How Do I Know God is Real?" *Slice of Infinity* (June 2004). Available from:

<http://www.rzim.org/resources/read/asliceofinfinity/todaysslice.aspx?aid=8467>, accessed 29 July 2011.

"Gabriel Marcel." New World Encyclopedia. Available from:

[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gabriel\\_Marcel](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Gabriel_Marcel), accessed: 12 July 2010.

"Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy *Online*. Available from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marcel/>, accessed: 10 February 2012.

Hanley, Katharine Rose. "A Journey to Consciousness: Gabriel Marcel's Relevance for the Twenty-First-Century Classroom," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 80 (2006): 457-474. Available from:

<http://gms.lemoyne.edu/documents/0002.pdf>, accessed: 5 July 210.

"I am: A Film by Tom Shadyac," 3. Available from: [http://iamthedoc.com/site/wp-content/press/I\\_AM\\_Presskit-FINAL.pdf](http://iamthedoc.com/site/wp-content/press/I_AM_Presskit-FINAL.pdf), accessed: 11 March 2013.

Kroner, Richard J. "Existentialism and Christianity." *Encounter* 17 (Summer 1956): 219-244. Available from

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=6&hid=119&sid=5b1f8261-68bc-4d75-a9c0-7770d42f56b6%40sessionmgr110>, accessed: 28 September 2011.

Marcel, Gabriel. "Theism and Personal Relationships." *Cross Currents* 1 (Fall 1950): 35-

42. Available from: [http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e-](http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e-c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107&bquery=(gabriel+AND+marcel)&bdata=JmRiPXJmaCZjbGkwPUZUJmNsdjA9WSZ0eXBiPTEmc2l0ZT11aG9zdC1saXZl)

[c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107&bquery=\(gabriel+AND+marcel\)&bdata=JmRiPXJmaCZjbGkwPUZUJmNsdjA9WSZ0eXBiPTEmc2l0ZT11aG9zdC1saXZl](http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/results?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e-c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107&bquery=(gabriel+AND+marcel)&bdata=JmRiPXJmaCZjbGkwPUZUJmNsdjA9WSZ0eXBiPTEmc2l0ZT11aG9zdC1saXZl), accessed: 1 July 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Sacred in the Technological Age." *Theology Today* 19 (1962): 27-38. Available from

<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=c381ddd8-136a-45a8-ad6e-c6ced2120128%40sessionmgr112&vid=11&hid=107>, accessed: 27 June 2011.



- Rofrano, Frances J. "I/Thou-I/Spirit: Martin Buber and the Spiritual Life of the Infant," 59. Available from: [http://www.iona.edu/artsscience/orgs/pastoral/issues/2007\\_v42/FrancesJRofrano.pdf](http://www.iona.edu/artsscience/orgs/pastoral/issues/2007_v42/FrancesJRofrano.pdf), accessed: 24 May 2011.
- Thomas, Trevor. "Technocracy is the allure of scientism," *Gainsvilletimes*. Available from: <http://www.gainsvilletimes.com/archives/77853/>, accessed: 10 March 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Allure and Danger of Science," *The American Thinker* February 28, 2013. Available from: [http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/12/the\\_allure\\_and\\_danger\\_of\\_scientism.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/2012/12/the_allure_and_danger_of_scientism.html), accessed: 11 March 2013.
- Toner, Patrick. "The Existence of God." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1909. Available from: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06608b.htm>, accessed: 13 July 2012.
- Zahavi, Dan. "Beyond Empathy: Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity." *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8 (2001): 151-167. [http://cfs.ku.dk/staff/zahavi-publications/Zahavi\\_JCS\\_8\\_5-7.pdf/](http://cfs.ku.dk/staff/zahavi-publications/Zahavi_JCS_8_5-7.pdf/), date accessed: 9-8-11.

### *Videos*

- Shadyac, Tom *I am: Documentary*. DVD. Directed by Tom Shadyac. Distributor City: Distributor, 2011.



## APPENDIX

| <b>Chapter 5</b><br>Intersubjectivity        | <b>Chapter 6</b><br>Absolute Thou    | <b>Chapter 7</b><br>Correlation: Absolute Thou<br>as the Ground of Intersubjectivity |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Love</i> builds a we<br>community, I-Thou | Absolute Thou<br>as open presence    | <i>Agape</i><br>as the guiding principle of love                                     |
| <i>Fidelity</i> as<br>perpetuation of love   | Absolute Thou<br>as abiding presence | <i>Faith</i><br>as the guiding principle of fidelity                                 |
| <i>Hope</i> as <i>exigence</i> of<br>being   | Absolute Thou<br>as eternal presence | <i>Hope</i><br>as <i>exigence</i> for God, absolute<br>Thou                          |