

Prefatory Note: This essay was written during the summer of 1968 as a contribution to the volume on Gabriel Marcel to be published in the Library of Living Philosophers (Paul A. Schilpp, editor).

L'Exigence Ontologique

"Coming home the other evening from an excellent Bach concert, I thought to myself, 'Here is something that restores to one a feeling that one might have thought lost, or perhaps something more than a feeling, an assurance: the assurance that it is an honour to be a man.'"¹

While meditating on M. Marcel's work once again it seems entirely coherent that a particular Bach organ prelude has kept coming back, upsurging and unsummoned, to preside as if by rightful sovereignty over the reading for this essay. For to reflect with M. Marcel is to be drawn into a sense of humanity in which the honour--the dignity--of being human resounds; as with Bach. Even so the possibility of life in the mode of consecration seems to register upon us.

It is in terms of no less than this possibility of life that I hope we may approach that moving center of M. Marcel's thought--"l'exigence ontologique." An almost naive rationale might be offered for such an approach. "L'exigence ontologique" projects us into a metamorphosis of human concern. If we try to accompany M. Marcel's thought and follow the ramifications of his development of the theme, we find ourselves called upon to move thoughtfully into consideration of the deliverances of the life of concern as that life may deepen and 'come to understand itself.' "L'exigence ontologique," if not stifled or unheeded, involves us essentially in a kind of movement and becoming 'beyond ourselves.' And the life of concern becomes imbued with a sense of direction quite distinct from orientation in terms of ideals or of goals--to whatever extent it may support them. How, then, might one hope for reflective clarity from within such a movement

and such a becoming concerning the import of "'l'exigence ontologique'"? Might we approach our theme from the direction in which it takes us, letting it hold sway at its clearest, even if in so doing it may far outrun so much of our actual lives? Even as the possibility of life in the mode of consecration may occur to us, in a being beyond ourselves. Let us try to analyse such a possibility of life in terms which might be intrinsic to it.

To speak of possibility in connection with active undertaking may readily suggest choice; and consecration seems inseparable from a sense of active undertaking on our part. Yet we may notice that life in the mode of consecration is not present to us as a possibility relative to choice. Not because of the remoteness of such a possibility from our actual lives, but rather because the more near and present to us such a possibility becomes, the less does it appear to lie in our power, accessible to us as a matter of choice. Even definitively, the power of consecration seems to come to us so as to qualify initiative in the exercise of powers at our disposal as a dependent initiative. So far from being in the first instance a matter of availing ourselves of . . . , it would seem a matter of our being available, at the disposition of . . . , albeit willingly, consenting and assenting in . . . , unstintingly and without inhibition. But if the matter can be appropriately considered through an approach in such terms, how should we interpret the element of dependency seeming to obtain? Might the dependency in question imply some sort of straightforward reference through which to indicate that on which initiative in consecration would depend?

It would not seem amiss to speak in terms of a certain spirit of consecration, and of such a spirit as subject to a kind of alimention in us. In this connection that expression used by M. Marcel is very apt. Surely the beings we come to care for deeply, the place of our dwelling and the things of the place-- indeed all that occupies our attention in eliciting, sustaining, and deepening

our concern--would be salient for us in considering how a spirit of consecration may come to be nurtured in us. And since consecration seems so clearly a matter of concern with these beings and of active concern in their behalf, do they of themselves engender and sustain in us capacity for consecration? Is our dependency in becoming capable of consecration a dependency on those beings to which we attend in the openness and availability of really caring for them? In what manner do they thus concern us, and how do they come to concern us so?

In the manner of claiming us, I think; or, in response upon a sense of ourselves as claimed in a way qualifying our direct relationship with beings, so that they engage us in our responding upon our being claimed as addressed to our response. Yes, they come to concern us in the manner of claiming us in our concern with them; and they are indeed salient in our concerned attention. Yet their claiming us in such a way is not a matter of their making manifest as if inherent in themselves an origin of their standing in and for our concern. It is not self-assertively, we might say, that beings come to engage us in the mode of consecration. Nor is it we who confer on beings the standing in and for our concern in which we find ourselves so addressed by them. For we come to find ourselves as claimed and cannot originate our own being as claimed. Yet our own being as claimed seems indissolubly bound up with the standing in which we are able to receive and acknowledge beings in their very being as speaking to our concern.

Indeed the very possibility of consecration seems to imply acknowledgment, and perhaps most centrally a deeply silent acknowledgment of our being as claimed. For there is an absolute stillness about the matter--prior to all giving voice. Concern comes to mature birth in the manner of being unconditionally claimed; and in being so claimed, of its free and unforced accord in being so, it finds itself to be in a rooted and a grounded mode of being; it finds its *raison d'etre*

in its being in such a way--radically claimed and sustained in being. And such discovery occurs as enlightening with respect to that which has implicitly obtained all along in the life of concern, no matter the extent to which it may have been resisted, lost upon us, or otherwise obscured. To come to at least a measure of clarity in this radical mode of being, responsiveness must develop reflexively, for there can be no willing accord with our being as claimed or clarity with respect to it except in the reflexively responsive acceptance and acknowledgment of our being in this manner. At the same time our reflection must partake of the reflexivity of the way in which concern is radically dependent if that dependence is to be understood as at the root of our initiative, and of our freedom.

Perhaps we are wont to phrase the way in which we are unconditionally claimed 'from the root' as obtaining from within ourselves. Yet we ourselves are embraced, as it were, in being thus claimed 'from within.' But not only ourselves, all that may be present (or absent) as belonging with us in the world, is qualified, intoned, inflected--yes, defined--in point of essential mode of significance, according to this manner of our being embraced, with these beings. And it is thus, grasped in function of our being claimed, that these beings are in the manner of 'speaking to us.' Their instatement in and for concerned attention in claiming us to them seems of a shared derivation with the reflexively radical way in which we are claimed unconditionally. As from a grounding most intimately inward yet infinitely distant with respect to ourselves we stand forth into the meeting with beings, so they seem to come to us as proffered out of an inwardness from which they stand forth, so that there is this mutuality about sharing in being with them. Not only in the reciprocity between human beings, but in the mutual being unto one another of beings, a grounding of that mutuality seems to obtain.

Let us begin now to bring the line of reflection so far pursued into

connection with M. Marcel's ontological thought. What is it for beings to be given, and therefore responsively received, in the mode of presence?

Quand je dis qu'un être m'est donné comme présence ou comme être (cela revient au même, car il n'est pas un être pour moi s'il n'est une présence), cela signifie que je ne peux pas le traiter comme s'il était simplement posé devant moi; entre lui et moi se noue une relation qui en un certain sens déborde la conscience que je suis susceptible d'en prendre; il n'est plus seulement devant moi, il est aussi en moi; ou plus exactement ces catégories sont surmontées, elles n'ont plus de sens. Le mot influx traduit, bien que d'une façon beaucoup trop spatiale, trop physique, l'espèce d'apport intérieur, d'apport par le dedans qui se réalise dès le moment où la présence est effective.²

In responding to beings as beings I respond upon or from that which I attempt to reflect upon as a kind of accretion 'from within.' My openness or availability to beings is inseparable from a reflexive openness or availability; and better than these English expressions is M. Marcel's expression--"disponibilité."

Now the suggestion arising in the terms of the preceding analysis of consecration can be applied to the effect that "disponibilité" is twofold. Reflexive "disponibilité" is the deepening of concern in its radical character--and ultimately no less than a willing disposition of oneself in accord with being unconditionally claimed. But it is in and out of being so claimed that we can come to 'hear' and to heed beings in their grounded claim upon us; that hearing and heeding is the manner of our "disponibilité" in the direct engagement of concern by beings occupying our attention; accordingly "disponibilité" is also coordinately with respect to them. We are (1) reflexively bound over (2) unto beings in a (3) consequent grasp of the mutuality of being; therefore being itself becomes to the point, and fundamentally to the point in that it is its own point: the force of 'einai' is found in the to be as to be shared in with. This is simplicity itself. The sense of life lived in such a vein is that to be is shared in as a given, even a granted dispensation. One can give oneself in that. That is the hang of it.

It seems absolutely precise that M. Marcel has held by the theme of being as mysterious in the way in which we are involved in being; if that involvement is intelligible, it is intelligible as mysterious. The pivot of the mystery is the twofold way in which we are ordained in being: both reflexively, radically; and unto--unto all with which we come to share in being. In that radical grounding of the self in becoming reflexively 'disponible' as unconditionally claimed, one's very selfhood is the dispensation; one is graced in being able to be willingly and truly oneself. Yet that reflexive ordination and dispensation is integral with the disposition of concern unto beings as granted us to share in being with; those beings are grasped as given in consonance with the way in which we, who are infirm, can firmly participate in being with them. They call for recognition as participating in being; and being as thus fundamentally shared in is sacred. 'Appel et réponse' is the basic mode of our participation in being with other beings. Perhaps it is thus that music can come to the very language of being; as with Bach.

At that time--during 1929--when the ontological themes central to M. Marcel's thought were fast emerging for him in their connections, the particular expression occurs to him, and with a musical fecundity which he notes: "De l'être comme lieu de la fidélité."³ Twenty-six years later, alluding to that original phrasing of the expression, he remarks, "Tout au plus préciserai-je un peu davantage en disant: l'être est le lieu des plus hautes fidélités. . . . La seule fidélité qui vaille est positive, elle se traduit par des initiatives d'autant plus novatrices qu'elle même est enracinée plus fermement aux profondeurs de l'âme."⁴

If "disponibilité" is the twofold receptivity in the way in which we are claimed to participation in being, "la fidélité créatrice" is that sponsored initiative in adherence and commitment through which we place ourselves as

participants in being. Being is thus 'the place' of fidelity, and it is through active commitment of ourselves in adherence to beings as claiming our concern that we responsively find ourselves as placed in being. As "disponible" we are in the manner of being called upon, and beings claim our receptive attention in the manner of exerting appeal; correlative with our being as called upon there is the possibility of refusal, of betrayal and defection. The active acceptance, acknowledgment, pledging of oneself in commitment to . . . answeringly coordinate with appeal--this positive contrary of refusal, is the free defining and placing of oneself in being. Accordingly one's sense of being is decisively qualified both in the vein of freedom and in the vein of commitment--of an 'il faut' freely acknowledged and undertaken. In the 'highest' fidelity, that of consecration, we come knowingly into the world; and the law of that becoming is the essential complementarity in mutual qualification of freedom and necessity, as of initiative and grace.

By the time M. Marcel is well into his most protracted 'reconnaissance' of the mystery of being, he writes:

Mais ici il convient de rester aussi concret que possible, et je veux dire par là de rester comme à l'écoute de l'expérience la plus intime. Il ne s'agit en effet au fond de rien moins que d'apercevoir la façon dont il est possible de concevoir l'articulation de la vérité et de la vie.⁵

The 'discovery' of that connection by way of taking it up into reflection would hinge upon reflexive cognition (i.e. acknowledgment) of such a connection from within its obtaining, and by virtue of a "dimension" of humanly lived life "qui est précisément la profondeur elle-meme."⁶ The co-articulation of life and truth is therefore not analogous to something that can be "exposed to view" and "shown." The connection is exactly the point on which we must reflect however, at the center of our present undertaking. For one might define "l'exigence ontologique" as the sense of that connection, through which the life one leads--

with others, and in cumulative incidence of encounter with beings--becomes charged with the underlying constancy and unity of being continuously at issue for concern as manifold: so that there are no moments of concern which are alien or separable from a life rendered one through being ever at issue, and in such a way that one is inescapably called upon to bear witness to how that being at issue might come to decisive realization of itself. Now to the extent that our vital needs and their satisfaction, our interests and inclinations, our practical affairs, our relationships of obligation, our haunting anxieties, our hopes and our fears, our delights and discouragements, are taken up into an undertaking of life as at issue, and at issue for us in the mode of our being as called upon, with an underlying constancy of the sense of this being the way it is with us, then to that extent "'l'exigence'" draws on these myriad moments and ways of concern; they charge it as aspiration, as "metaphysical disquiet,"⁷ as commitment not to disavow them or exclude them from a hearing. But the hearing to which the whole life of concern comes--under "'l'exigence ontologique"--stands to the requirement of a certain detachment, a relinquishment of attachment to all one cares for without ceasing to care, a making over of oneself with all one's cares and all one cares for into the keeping of that claim and that call upon care known to it only from its own root.

Where in the life of the spirit receptivity and active initiative become so basically integral as in the matter now concerning us, perhaps it is not inappropriate to speak of a kind of 'movement' in that life, yes, even of a polarisation which may occur in it and within which we come to discover ourselves in a certain way. The image of "dégagement," detachment and withdrawal, suggests what we can sense as a movement: a movement in which we are moved so to move. To relinquish, suspend, draw back, to gather, but gather inwardly; to recollect. And to come near . . . yet not as one turns from something seen so as to look

in an opposite direction and then draw nearer what may appear from that direction. "Le recueillement est sans doute ce qu'il y a de moins spectaculaire dans l'âme; il ne consiste pas à regarder quelque chose, il est une reprise, une réflexion intérieure . . . Le mot anglais 'to recollect one self' est ici révélateur."⁸ There is the suggestion of moving into a reflectiveness from being intent upon our affairs--immersed in them; from having been bent on what we were doing. Perhaps, too, if we have been insistently bent on what we were doing, then there must be a rather radical 'giving over' in so far as we come to place ourselves, recollectively, questioningly, and in question, nearer the center of our lives, in concentration, and positioned "comme à l'écoute." The deeper the candor of spirit in recollection, the more our concerns and the beings engaging them come to be as weighed--and weighed by a measure to which we bring ourselves. If in meditative recollection there is the active animation of genuine concentration, it is also as if within that concentration things had a chance to discover themselves, and more nearly as they might really be; maybe, even, and most deeply . . . 'as they want to be'. Until, most incredibly of all . . . it is so: we are, all beings, as affirmed in our being; to be owned in a standing received as a blessing and having nothing to do with deserving it or not; it is in this standing that we are given in the mutuality of being which comes to human recognition as the entitlement of beings to respect. In our being reflexively beneficiaries of being-as-unconditionally-affirmed we are unconditionally and wholly claimed as beings of concern; at the same time we are ordained in responsiveness to beings through a union with them in which they address us as to be shared with in being-as-unconditionally-affirmed. It is with them that confirmation of that affirmation can come to pass. The life of concern thus comes to be animated upon ontological truth as at issue in it, continuously open to confirmation in our actual circumstance and relation with beings; and calling

for it. "L'exigence ontologique" could not be so fulfilled as to obviate its continuing relevance, nor could the way of its fulfillment ever be subsumed to our disposal or made assured.

We have spoken of "recueillement" and of the pivotal "dégagement" in this essential movement in the life of the spirit as even a polarisation of that life. Yet the crucial point in our analysis of it lies in recognising that radical polarisation as instituting the complementary movement of "accueil" and of "engagement" with respect to beings, the movement into meeting them in direct responsiveness to them, in the mutuality of fellow creatures, therein to live and confirm the destinate dispensation in which we find ourselves gathered. In the discipline of rhythmic alternation between these complementary movements each distinctively derives occasion and renewal from the other. All concerns have a questionableness riding on them calling for qualification which can only obtain in a radical way; they require to be brought to a trial and a testing through a reflexive disposition of oneself--the self who lives those concerns--as subject to emendation, and an emendation alone forthcoming from the depth of that life. Not otherwise than in reflexive concentration can concern come to the realisation of its life as conditional in essence, and that therefore no concern can admit of endorsement or substantiation as unconditional. What is unconditional about the life of concern is the unconditional claiming of it and affirming of it in its conditional character through the radical groundedness of that life. Yet the life so grounded is none other than the manifold life of concern with beings as they engage and speak to concern. The renewal and the truing of concern in reflexive concentration is the renewal and truing of concern with beings. Thus the test of detachment in reflexive concentration is in the incarnate life into which we are 'returned.' Are our ties with beings the ties of attachment or do they assume the character of a solidarity in being to be acted upon? Is life

in the spirit lived in contrariety with that in the flesh, or is it only lived as incarnate? Do we find ourselves alienated from the circumstances in which we actually move, so that they appear as contingent relative to an assumed standpoint abstracting from our involvement in them, or do they occur to us as contributory to the precise form in which what is ours to live is given to be undertaken?

Near the close of the first series of his Gifford Lectures M. Marcel remarks:

On peut dire d'une manière générale que la difficulté à laquelle nous avons eu continuellement à faire face réside justement dans le fait que le spirituel semble prétendre à la dignité d'existence séparée, alors que plus profondément il ne se constitue comme spirituel qu'à condition de s'incarner.⁹

It is exactly in this connection that the twofoldness of the life of concern hangs in the balance for interpretation; and more particularly--as a key to that interpretation, how "dégagement" is understood becomes crucial. In the 1933 essay so central for our study M. Marcel begins mention of the latter: "Dégagement réel; détachement réel . . ." ¹⁰ such as is effected only in "le recueillement," and through which alone apprehension of the mystery of being is possible. Considering "le recueillement" as act:

C'est essentiellement l'acte par lequel je me ressaisis comme unité: le mot même l'indique, mais ce ressaisissement, cette reprise effectue l'aspect d'une détente, d'un abandon. Abandon à . . . détente en présence de . . . sans qu'il me soit en aucune façon possible de faire suivre ces prépositions d'un substantif qu'elles commanderaient. Le chemin s'arrête au seuil . . . ¹¹

Can we draw from these indications further amplification on the meaning of detachment in question? Taking them in their fuller context in the essay and in relation to the companioning material of the period in Être et Avoir, they suggest a further step in our analysis. It is simply the step of making more explicit the sense of "abandon à . . ."

Initially we spoke of "dégagement" in terms of a relinquishing, a 'giving over,' a relinquishment of attachment to all one cares for without ceasing to

care. How is that possible? It is not possible in any forced way, as in the manner of a control exerted over oneself; nor is it possible in the manner of becoming resigned; nor is it possible as a 'turning away from' or withdrawal in disillusionment. It is only possible in the manner of renouncing a claim, a vested interest, a proprietary demand.

Now beneath the interplay of desire and fear which can come to hold us in thrall as if simply subject to compulsion, there is far more fundamentally and pivotally the matter of willing; not in the sense that one wills to feel as one comes to feel, but in the sense that in relation to our willing in a certain manner our wanting comes to be inflected. To become enslaved to our wants and consequent fears in mounting tension is not a matter attributable to desire credited as an inherently suspect mode of concern and autonomous factor governing our actions. That it may come to appear so, as indeed it may, must be traced to a kind of appropriative willing in which, however tacitly, a claim is staked to having what we want. Relative to a presumed autonomy in the attempt to take charge of our lives and direct them we cannot find ourselves incarnately in the flow of appeal to concern into which sensory and appetitive elements come as the very embodiment of the life of spirit. Rather these elements erupt as the signaling and triggering of 'self-directed' pursuits; they occur as 'drives' and are appropriated as 'signs'. Being active thus assumes the character of driving to control pursuits into which one is driven. And the mechanisms through which control may be extended become centrally preoccupying, invested with an authority of their own. Where they can be extended, there the 'self-directed' life tends to follow, the means of taking charge defining its destiny. 'Nature' then assumes the defining aspect of the exploitable resource; and no thing can be sacred.

Substitution of one pursuit for another and the redefinition of ends and goals in the hope that they will lead to the rectification of what is sensed as

a predicament are dialectically characteristic of entrenchment in attachment. The predicament only deepens and ramifies in the style of life which construes the issue of concern in terms of a solution to be sought. And it can be in just such a vein that the 'distinctively' intellectual, moral, or spiritual life are embraced--as strongholds of an individual autonomy defined in opposition to heteronomous determination or the threat of it. Significantly, in so far as these represent recourses in attachment, the 'natural' and the 'vital' tend to fall into the distinct status of the subhuman. The sterilisation of their lived meaning consigns them to the keeping of regimens of health and subsistence, with attendant possibilities of pleasure to be exploited--or eschewed.

Through whatever identifiable concerns our lives may tend into emptiness, a transference of attachment from them to some alternative recourse in attempting to effect independence of them is the pattern of attachment. Now if our analysis of concern as twofold is not basically misconceived, perhaps we can suggest in this very connection how in particular "le spirituel semble prétendre à la dignité d'existence séparée . . ." In so far as the life of concern is lived in the manner of attachment to beings it is bound for emptiness and comes to crisis in despair; mortality assures that. Yet if there be seriousness in despair there is potentiation of concern from the root. Even as all one's manifold concerns in the whole round of life and all its walks come into radical question, there is something unconditional about the vainness of concern's extroverted quest. Stirred with the sense of that which is inward to its own life, but still clinging to its directive bent, it seeks its own identity in the form of an inner life. Only as other beings hold forth the promise to it of confirming it in this, its own unconditional form, and the identity to be reached through it, can they speak to its condition. Its separate life in introversion is still attachment's quest, carried out as a pursuit on which 'everything' is felt to depend. Whereas concern

for beings in time has found itself vulnerable and them wanting, is it not to the imperishable and the unchangeable that concern must turn? With a sameness of autonomous intent concern turns from the manifold relations of engagement with beings and stakes itself in a spiritual venture pursued as an effort to attain emancipation from those concerns through which it has come to naught. The premium is upon establishing a life in independence of those concerns. The intimations of that which is unconditional about the life of concern from the depth of its own life are subsumed to the support of a concern--that of the distinctively spiritual life--pursued as itself unconditional and contrary to the concerns from which detachment is sought. The twofold life of concern suffers diremption. A dialectic of contraries sets in. On the one hand concern lives in the mode of an elective emphasis in which intention tends to absolutise itself: concern 'owns' only that which is intended, sought, chosen: whatever it is driving at. On the other hand concern lives in inadvertency; and not alone in dreaming. Things unintendedly keep coming over it, now insinuatingly, now eruptingly; perhaps unrecognised, unnoticed, because unsought, unintended; perhaps obtrusively and persistently--in a manner contrary to its avowed emphasis and intention. On the one hand there is the sense of being active as driving, on the other that of passivity, inertia, and of being driven. Hence the premium on exercising autonomy that defines itself in rejection of a looming and opposing heteronomy--threatening to take over. Yet at the same time with the striving to subject life to administration on which hope is pinned there is the attraction of resignation even if in hopelessness: the rest from striving, relinquishment into passivity--the moribund.

The dialectical character of the situation would seem the same whether the elective emphasis is on 'the spiritual life'--as opposed to 'this-worldliness'--or on the manifold concerns of 'this world'--as opposed to 'spirituality'. Since concern tends to dogmatic entrenchment in either of these autonomous emphases

and misses its complicity in the correlative heteronomy against which it defines itself, it misses the dialectical character of its entire life. But what is the correlative heteronomy to the elective emphasis which does not find itself carnally opposed? What sort of 'Doppelgänger' threatens the autonomy of concern in an unconditional owning of 'this world' conceived in repudiation of 'spiritual claims'? Is it not preeminently a far stranger and less obtrusive sort of heteronomy: that of the psychic life itself, hidden and largely a stranger to the consciousness of the person whom it claims in inadvertency? With the immolation of spirituality and the triumphant embracing of 'this world' as its field of action, concern atrophies in point of reflexive sensitivity; and the life of spirit, entombed, in spiritlessness, is just what threatens the dogma of immersion in the affairs of 'this world'. The basic disturbances now occurring occur as peculiarly psychic in origin. Yet they occur in such a way that concern 'truthfully' deplores and disowns them. And to fix responsibility for what is going wrong becomes an ascendant passion. There must be someone or something to indict; someone or something one might lay hands on and control. The formula of autonomy is that power is either to be exerted over the situation or succumbed to; thus things are basically defined in point of significance as resources to be used in exerting control in behalf of concern. Objectivity is just what is required in dealing with things; subjectivity requires it. Subjectivity however short-circuits the way in which things can come to mean and signify in the life of spirit, even as in an alternate elective emphasis 'spirituality' does. Therefore the things that come to us naturally are known as 'merely natural' and 'matter of course', belonging to the order of the ordinary and of habituation as a mode of coming to take them for granted. Thus the discovery of the natural in the mode of a sacramental order is not only precluded. It becomes unimaginable.

Sacramental participation in being with beings: into that we come

knowingly only in the manner of responding upon being called upon in such a way that beings and the inexhaustible depth of life come into mutually confirmatory accord. Then too the world is established in its truth--that is, as revealed in a decisive way; and temporality comes to have the precise resonance of forever and evermore. It is in the world so established and revealed that beings belong, in their very being.

No sense whatsoever can be made of being in abstraction from a participation in being with all one's heart, with all one's soul, and with all one's mind. Yet that seems to require of one no more than oneself, willingly disposed.

"L'exigence ontologique" is the way in which we are as called upon. It leads to the discovery of ourselves as active in the mode of initiative sponsored in receptivity. Perhaps M. Marcel's most fundamental contribution in the reflective life of the West lies here: in having clearly transposed being active from a defining contrariety with passivity, into a defining complementarity with receptivity.

It is that musical ear of his which has held him to his task, that of discovering what it may mean to participate in being as human.

"The truth is that humanity is only truly human when it is upheld by the incorruptible foundations of consecration--without such foundations it decomposes and dies."¹²

Acquiescing now in the lapse of even more than the time allotted for the preparation of this essay, one comment has kept coming to mind as needed by way of an acknowledgment: In talking of participation in being with beings, and of beings as 'they', the style tends to contradict the style of participation--which is that of 'L'appel et réponse'. The language of invocation and of evocation, spoken in that way, is the precise language in which we can hope for consonant articulation of the theme here taken in an analytic way.

Footnotes

¹Gabriel Marcel, Men Against Humanity (London: The Harvill Press, 1952), p. 188.

²Gabriel Marcel, Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique (Paris: Vrin, 1949), p. 81. (Essay originally published with Le Monde Cassé, Ed. Desclée de Brouwer, 1933.)

When I say a being is granted to me as a presence or as a being (it comes to the same, for he is not a being for me unless he is a presence), this means that I am unable to treat him as if he were merely placed in front of me; 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. The word influx conveys, though in a manner which is far too physical and spacial, the kind of interior accretion, of accretion from within, which comes into being as soon as presence is effective.

From the English translation by Manya Harari, in Philosophy of Existence (London: The Harvill Press, 1948), p. 24.

³Gabriel Marcel, Être et Avoir (Paris: Aubier, 1935), p. 55. Cf. Being and Having, Trans. Katharine Farrer, (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949), p. 41; "Being as the place of fidelity."

⁴Gabriel Marcel, "L'idée de niveau d'expérience et sa portée métaphysique," Revue des Travaux de l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, 108^e Année, 4^e Série, 1955 (2^e semestre), p. 140. Italics in text.

At most I would say by way of further qualification: being is the place of the highest forms of fidelity . . . The only fidelity which counts is positive; it expresses itself in forms of initiative which are the more innovative the more firmly it is rooted in the depths of the soul. (My translation.)

⁵Gabriel Marcel, Le Mystère de L'Être (Paris: Aubier, 1951), Vol. I, p. 207.

But at this point we ought to try to keep our thinking as concrete as possible, and by that I mean attending in a listening way for what may come to us from our most intimate experience. For in the last analysis what we have to perceive is no less than the manner in which the co-articulation of life and truth can be conceived. (My translation.)

⁶Ibid.

⁷For M. Marcel's development of this theme in careful distinction from that of 'anxiety', see L'Homme Problématique (Paris: Aubier, 1955), passim. The image of divine leavening for 'metaphysical disquiet' seems exact (p. 117).

⁸Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique, p. 64.

Recollection is doubtless what is least spectacular in the soul; it does not consist in looking at something, it is a recovery of inward purchase, an inward renewal . . . The English word 'to recollect oneself' is revealing here. (My translation.)

⁹Le Mystère de L'Être, Vol. 1, pp. 218-219.

In a very general fashion indeed, one might say that the difficulty we have had, in the course of these lectures, continually to confront lies in the fact that the spiritual seems to wish to claim for itself the dignity of a separate existence, whereas in a deeper sense it only constitutes itself effectively as spirit on condition of becoming flesh.

From The Mystery of Being, Vol. 1, translation by G. S. Fraser (Chicago: Regnery, 1951), p. 202.

¹⁰Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique, p. 62.

¹¹Ibid., p. 63. Italics in text.

The word means what it says--the act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this hold, this grasp upon myself, is also relaxation and abandon. Abandon to . . . relaxation in the presence of . . . yet there is no noun for these prepositions to govern. The way stops at the threshold.

The Philosophy of Existence, p. 12.

Comment: Would one really wish to sustain even the attempt to establish a reference for these prepositions in the manner of seeking something like a being or beings to be referred to by a noun? Or, might it not instead be precisely the reflexive grounding of self that is here in question, making the way of 'reference to' irrelevant in that connection? One is derivatively oneself in responding from and upon; it is thus that one is encouraged, in-spirited, and even so--radically blessed.

¹²Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator, translation by Emma Craufurd (Chicago: Regnery, 1951), p. 96.