

EXISTENCE AS BELONGING: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

[EXISTÊNCIA COMO PERTENCIMENTO: o existencialismo de Gabriel Marcel]

Martín Grassimartingrassi83@gmail.com

Doutor em Filosofia pela UBA (Argentina), com a tese Fidelidad y disponibilidad: a metafísica del nosotros de Gabriel Marcel. Licenciado em Filosofia pela UCA, com a dissertação El hombre como ser encarnado y la 'filosofía concreta' de Gabriel Marcel. É professor do Departamento de Filosofía da Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA) – Facultad de Filosofía y Letras Profesorado Superior en Filosofía e Investigador Asistente em Filosofía (CONICET-Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Buenos Aires). Publicou, entre outros trabalhos, “O Deus da fé na filosofia concreta de Gabriel Marcel” na coletânea Encarnação e transcendência: Gabriel Marcel, 40 anos depois (Cascavel, Edunioeste, 2013); “Ignorare Aude! La existencia ensayada” (Buenos Aires, Cooperativas/Instituto Acton Argentina, 2012) e “(Im)posibilidad y (sin)razón: la filosofía, o habitar la paradoja” (Buenos Aires, Letra Viva, 2014). Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow – Institut für Hermeneutik (Universität Bonn)

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DOI: [10.25244/uf.v13i3.1222](https://doi.org/10.25244/uf.v13i3.1222)**Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel**

GRASSI, Martín

Resumo: O existencialismo é normalmente considerado uma filosofia da auto-afirmação. Entretanto, a filosofia existencial de Gabriel Marcel enfatiza o pertencimento (*participation*) e a comunidade como os conceitos fulcrais para compreender a existência humana. A existência humana pertence ao mundo, a outros seres semelhantes, ao Ser em si mesmo e ao Transcendente. Ao enfatizar o pertencimento, Marcel oferece uma nova e radical perspectiva sobre a liberdade e a metafísica, pois o ser não pode senão ser acolhido, e a dinâmica inteira da liberdade é sobre responder ao chamado do Outro. Esse tipo particular de existencialismo, portanto, pode desempenhar hoje um papel proeminente no debate filosófico, principalmente por evitar a oposição dialética entre o Eu e o Outro. A filosofia de Marcel oferece algumas percepções centrais sobre o significado da palavra “com” e, portanto, questiona a nossa compreensão da comunidade e do ser-com.

Palavras-chave: Existência. Pertencimento. Metafísica. Comunhão. Ética. Religião.

Abstract: Existentialism is usually considered to be a philosophy of the individual self-affirmation. However, the existential philosophy of Gabriel Marcel stresses belonging (*participation*) and community as the core concepts to understand human existence. Human existence belongs to the world, to other fellow beings, to Being itself and to the Transcendent. By stressing belonging, Marcel gives a radical new perspective on freedom and metaphysics, for being can only be welcomed, and the whole dynamics of freedom is about answering to the Other's calling. This peculiar kind of existentialism, thus, can play a major role today in the philosophical debate, mainly by avoiding the dialectical opposition between the Self and the Other. Marcel's philosophy offers some central insights on the meaning of the word “with”, and, thus, questions our understanding of community and being-with.

Keywords: Existence. Belonging. Metaphysics. Communion. Ethics. Religion.

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel
GRASSI, Martín

I BEING PRESENT, BEING CALLED

In the core of the existentialist movement, one will always find a certain response to the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel. Most of the times, existentialists are known for their withdrawal from the Hegelian motive of grounding the whole of reality and experience in terms of reason. In the name of the singular, claiming for the right to a secret, existentialism stood up against this synthetic and systematic philosophy of the Whole. Søren Kierkegaard is considered, in this respect, the father of modern existentialism (and, in a retrospective way, Socrates, Augustine and Pascal are sometimes considered as proto-existentialists, mainly because they stress the subjective and singular experience in building up philosophical ideas). However, Hegel was not only a “negative” influence for the existentialist movement. Quite on the contrary, one could find, for instance, that Jean-Paul Sartre’s *L’Être et le Néant* -the mayor work of the most influential existentialist- is based upon a Hegelian triad: *être-en-soi*, *être-pour-soi*, *être-pour-autre*. Even more, the first French existential philosopher –that is, Gabriel Marcel- was not influenced by Kierkegaard’s work, but from Anglophone neo-Hegelianism.¹ The core category behind these authors was *relationality*, a category that shapes Hegel’s metaphysics in contrast to the traditional ontology based upon the category of substance -or even of subject.

In the present paper, I intend to show how Gabriel Marcel’s understanding of existence is not opposed to the idea of belonging (as a singular that can only achieve existence in taking distance from everything and affirming itself autonomically); existence entails *being-in-relation*, *being-part-of*.² Although Marcel’s work has not been yet sufficiently studied, and was eclipsed by Sartre and Kierkegaard, I will argue that his philosophy is of much interest for us today, for it aims at understanding existence together with belonging. His basic ontological idea is that of *participation*: to exist is to belong, to be related to something else than oneself. This relational essence of existence must be traced in our human experiences, all of which express some kind of relationship towards an-Other: Being, God, other fellow human beings, and the World.

Since this idea of belonging (*participation*) is mainly defined by our experience of being-together among our human fellows, building up from the syntax of personal pronouns, one could call Marcel’s philosophy -a philosophy that conceives *existence as belonging-* a *Metaphysics of usness* (GRASSI, 2014). However, although we could underline that this I-Thou-We scheme has a certain *phenomenological* privilege to signify communion, and only by an analogical operation could be said of other relationships (man-world, man-God), existential belonging cannot be reduced to this interpersonal dimension: not only we relate to other men, but also to the world and to the Transcendent (as one can find in religious experiences). To meet an-other implies, always, that oneself is affected by the other and is called to take part in its dynamics. Marcel’s category of belonging (*participation*), far from echoing a platonic ontology of difference and *mimesis*, aims at signifying the primordial situation in which a person finds himself submerged in a reality from which he cannot withdraw. Thus, there is no personhood when there is no *co-affection* (Cf. GALLAGHER, 1962, p. 20). Using a

¹ Gabriel Marcel was heavily influenced by Ernest William Hocking, Josiah Royce and Francis Herbert Bradley. His mayor work, *Journal Métaphysique*, was dedicated both to Hocking and Henri Bergson.

² The idea of belonging was somehow considered strange to existentialism because of its stress on the individual and on “self-affirmation”. One could find in Paul Tillich –an important XXth century theologian, heavenly influenced by existentialism- this kind of contrast between self-affirmation and belonging (1980, Chapter 5).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

musical metaphor, Marcel (being himself a musician) understands *participation* from the situation of musical improvisation. Far from creating melodies, music itself seems to emerge from a *com-penetration* between the musician and a musical unity that surpass him and that he can barely glimpse at. If the musician withdraws from belonging to this musical unity, he wouldn't be able to play any longer. Similarly, when it comes to participation, there is a unity of alterities (the participants) that receive their being from this belonging. *The plethoric reality of togetherness makes the singular to be such: one does not exist in loneliness, but only as far as one belongs to some encompassing reality.*

The primal and grounding ontological belonging is to be found in existence's belonging to Being: "We are committed in Being, it does not depend on us to get out of It: in other words, *we are*, and the thing is to know how we are situated towards this plethoric reality" (MARCEL, 1935b, p. 47, my translation). As long as we are, we are in Being, we participate in Being, we belong to Being. We should not understand participation as causality, as if Being were some-*thing* that gives being to something else: Being is, and we are. Western ontology was mainly based in this idea of causality, which is grounded in the subject-object epistemological scheme, a scheme that does not make justice to our human experience. In order to understand ontology otherwise, Marcel proposes a categorical distinction between *problem* and *mystery*: whereas in a problem subjectivity judges and considers a situation from the *outside*, *within* a mystery, subjectivity is no longer such, for is no longer confronted with an object. Within mystery, "subjectivity" founds itself intimately implied and committed in the lived situation, making impossible any exit maneuver or any view from above: unlike a problem, mystery is no longer under our super-vision. Being, therefore, cannot be considered as an object, for *we are*; our basic ontological situation is *to be*. The *mystery of Being* is, thus, the central existential mystery, heart of every *meta-problematic* or mysterious situation. *Mystery* and *participation* are the two sides of the same coin: to exist is to be, and existence cannot be grasped without its belonging to Being.

Being, therefore, is not an object: it can be neither characterized nor defined, for all these kinds of epistemological activities entail *distance* and *detachment*. Being is revealed in the inner dynamics of human existence, that moves diligently and restlessly towards *consistence*, that is, towards fulfillment. Being reveals itself as "that" which do not disappoint us in this search; Being is the Plethoric Presence that cannot let us down.³ As such, Being cannot

³ As Gallagher explains: "Marcel does not mean by 'being' precisely what Troisfontaines says he does. I do not accede to the realm of being simply by freely accepting my situation, but by recognizing that the roots of my situation go down into the eternal. Being is the eternal dimension of my existential situation. Being is that to which I aspire. (...) Whether or not he [a man] has really reached the level of being depends upon the manner of his acceptance of his situation. I can transform my existential situation into a vehicle for being if I accept in the sign of the eternal. The level at which I respond is the essential thing. Not just any free acceptance of any situation transforms it into 'being'. My situation is a bearer of being only insofar as it is transparent to the spirit, to the eternal. Now it would be quite correct to advance the suggestion that for Marcel a true acceptance of my situation is only possible in the sign of the eternal. Father Troisfontaines surely understands his distinction in this manner. Yet even so, it is still not the free attachment to my situation which ushers me into being, but my free attachment to being which enables me to accept my situation" (1962, p. 62). Metaphysics can be described as a non-problematic and non-technical thought, and Being is that which eludes any attempt to be objectified; in this manner of thinking, there is a certain proximity between Marcel and Martin Heidegger. As Chad Engelland states: "In the last century, both Gabriel Marcel and Martin Heidegger labored to carve out the proper matter and manner of thinking. The proper matter insofar as they struggled to free for thinking the mystery of being, that which is most worthy of thought. The proper manner insofar as they struggled to articulate the specific character of a thinking that would be adequate to this mystery. To this end, both engaged in an ongoing polemic with modern technology and its dominant mode of thought: problem-solving (Marcel) or calculating reasoning (Heidegger). Both thinkers sought to free thinking from a representational mode of

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel
GRASSI, Martín

present itself but obliquely, running away from its own phenomenality, as it surpasses every attempt to grasp it. The essence of Being is this excess itself. As the ultimate “saturated phenomena” (using Jean-Luc Marion’s category), Being reveals itself in blinding its own epiphany: in Marcel’s words, one can only have a “blind intuition” of Being (1935b, p. 175). This paradoxical intuition (which sees without seeing) is grounded in an existential “assurance of Being” (MARCEL, 1949, p. 65), an assurance that gives meaning to everything we do. In its excess, Being reveals itself as the Life behind our lives, as the core of our whole existence. In a peculiar kind of certainty (an *experiential* more than a *rational* one), we affirm our existence affirming Being, although we also know that we cannot simply identify ourselves with Being. The abyss between our being and Being itself comes forward as an *ontological demand* (*exigence ontologique*), the driving force that nurtures our “restless heart” and that calls to plenitude.⁴ Strictly speaking, this *ontological demand* is the *cipher* (to use a category coming from another existential thinker, such as Karl Jaspers) of our belonging to Being (Cf. SILVA, 2015). To refuse this ontological participation is simply to refuse existence, and philosophy is but the reflective activity to embrace meaning in belonging, and to avoid the temptation of believing that “life is a tale told by an idiot” (Marcel recall this everlasting text of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*) (MARCEL, 1949, p. 51; Cf. BUGBEE, 1984).

In examining “the ontological weight of human experience” (MARCEL, 1935b, 149), thus, one should surpass this epistemological dichotomy between an object and a subject. Metaphysics is beyond objectivity, not because Being is an *hyper-object*, but because Being simply *is*, is itself made present to us. The ontological entails, therefore, the difference between *objectivity* and *presence*, which Marcel examines carefully in his essay “Existence et objectivité” (1935a, pp. 309-329). As in the distinction between *problem* and *mystery*, this binomial illustrates the two ways an experience can be constituted. On the one hand, certain epistemological needs of the subject produce a certain object, which must answer to the subject’s demands. The object is constituted by the cognitive activity of subjectivity, which refers to it from a certain distance and in a “third person perspective”, as when someone explains to another what the object is. The relationship with an object is, thus, *triadic*: I do not refer directly to the object, nor the object takes me into account. The subject-object relationship is one of strangeness. Moreover, due to the dialectical needs of correlation, the subject within the objective experience turns to be a stranger for himself, for he is no longer an *I* (nor a *Thou*) but a he or a she, or even more, an *it* (an “x”, to put it in a Kantian way): subjectivity is impersonal, transcendental, abstract, timeless, bodyless. The subject lives nowhere, sees from nowhere; the subject is not *me*. And only because there is a subject in me

thinking and a technical mode of problem solving by turning to the positive mystery of being, to its in principle inexhaustible wondrousness –even if their understanding of that mystery differed greatly. Marcel, thinker of the person and the concrete, understands the domain of mystery as opened in interpersonal *agape*; Heidegger, thinker of *Dasein* and then *Ereignis* and *Lichtung*, understands the domain of mystery as opened by the free (though non-personal) appropriation of being. Marcel’s mystery is mysterious because of its over-fullness and consequent impossibility of being given; Heidegger’s mystery is mysterious because of its withdrawing negativity and consequent impossibility of being given” (2004, pp. 94-95). And further: “For Marcel, mystery overflows and radiates. It really does reveal itself even if it cannot be grasped or brought to simple presence. It is concealed because of its super-abundance and saturation and not because it hides itself in the manifesting of beings or protects itself from degradation to the interplay of presencing/absencing. Mystery is *présence* (not presence versus absence but a reality which is other than this interplay). Whereas in Heidegger we find a fundamental emptiness in the mode of primordial withdrawing, in Marcel there is a primordial *présence* (not as *Anwesenheit* but as *die Fülle*). Marcel’s *présence* ultimately requires the other and not just someone or someone else, but an encounter rooted in the domain of love” (p. 102).

⁴ Marcel claims that his whole work cannot be well understood without Augustine’s idea of “restless heart” (1967, p. 117)

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

that is not me, can the object be constituted in its universality, as having an epistemological value that do not depend in the concrete “I” that I am. Neither the object nor the subject *are* no longer: “they” are constituted in “their” strangeness, *con-fronted* with each other from the distance. Even more, “they” *are* no longer: subject and object rest static within the objective relationship, where nothing happens, for everything is already defined in a timeless, lifeless *sub specie aeternitatis*. The subject and the object rest in peace, as tokens coming from the past, offered to everyone as if they were old pieces in a museum. There is nothing one could “expect” from neither of both, for there is no possible future for them... as a matter of fact (as being “factual” matter, something already “made”), they do not even have a present.

In the experience of *presence*, on the contrary, there is not a subject confronting an object, as if we were in a warfare situation, where a stranger invades and captures the other. In the experience of presence, oneself and the other *con-form* each other as *un-detachable totalities*, as beings that reveal themselves in their infinite and original richness, leaving nothing aside. In the realm of presence, one *encounters* the other, that is, the other and I both offer each other to each other. In the generous giving each other to the other, we are present to each other, and, thus, present to ourselves. One cannot define or characterize the other, for the other presents to me and offers me the chance to (be) present (to) myself. There is presence (*il y a de présence*), presence is present... that is the one thing that one can assure. In presence there is no distance, but proximity. There is *con-tact*, *influx* (as Marcel would say (1933, p. 81). Presence is co-presence: in meeting the other we are *moved* (*co-motion*). In this *mutual giving* (*donation*), in this mutual “present”, beings come to be, they welcome themselves in welcoming the other. Far from a “third person perspective”, we *address* the other in a “first-second person perspective”. The objective *indicative* language is left aside on behalf of the other: “we” *are*, now, in the realm of *invocation*. In meeting the other there is no *tertium quid*, there is no judge, nor any anonymous court: in meeting the other, we both witness in silence each other. Presence is given without any mediation, in the sacred language of secrecy and immediacy (where we are paradoxically revealed in our *in-visibility*, in our *being beyond being*, as Levinas would say), there where *words* are no longer meaningful.⁵ In meeting, we both offer each other as a *pro-mise* perpetually renewed, opening each other to what is to come, the *un-predictable* future (*ad-venire*). As we enter the realm of presence “unarmed”, without any previous strategy or any need to subjugate the other, we become one with the other, we become ourselves in belonging, without being able to get out of it “unharméd”.

Somehow captive of Kantian categories, *experience* was reduced to objectivity, and, then, the question was how to set it free from this too narrow cage. However, although it seemed that one should ground experience on an epistemological, objective, ground, Gabriel Marcel insists that the contrary is true: experience stems originally and fundamentally from our belonging (*participation*): there is, first of all, a *con-motion* between beings that meet in the daily life. Objectivity is, thus, rooted in this mutual influx of beings coming to be together: it is an epistemological experience grounded in a previous ontological encounter. As such, objectivity is a “broken experience”, sustained by the “plethoric experience” of *presence*. For objectivity entails a stepping out of the situation of belonging, a strategy moved by the vital need of manipulation and control over the *things* (not *beings* anymore!) that surround us. And

⁵ “Le *toi* existe-t-il? Il me semble que plus je me place au plan de toi, moins la question d’existence se pose; pourtant n’y a-t-il pas un *en deçà* du lui que serait du pur subjectif –qui serait infra-existential? Au fond, je ne puis m’empêcher de traiter le «fait d’être soi» comme étant le prédicat d’un «lui». Mais il n’en serait ainsi qu’au cas où il faudrait accepter l’alternative leibnizienne: sujet ou prédicat; peut-être le substantialisme n’est-il que la métaphysique du *lui*. Mais le *toi* est à l’invocation ce que l’objet est au jugement; il ne peut être dégagé de ce qu’on doit considérer comme sa fonction sans cesser d’être *toi*” (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 277).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

since human experience is always somehow reflected as being conscious, Marcel distinguishes between a *primary reflection* (which installs the disjunction between subject and object) and *secondary reflection* (that wills to re-turn to the original experience of presence that objectivity lost). The *secondary reflection* is, therefore, the main instrument of metaphysical thought, the *alpha* and *omega* of the entire philosophical labor, which does not search for definitions nor concepts, but digs through the debris of objectivity to reach the ontological, the presence of Being to which we belong, and which reveals itself in blindness (Cf. GRASSI, 2011a).⁶

However, secondary reflection must not be considered as an active process to push forward the ontological. Contrariwise to primary reflection, secondary reflection is not so much about activity, but of passivity, of opening itself to the calling of Being. This essential attitude of being open to presence is called by Marcel *availability* (*dis-ponibilité*), an openness that is more ethical than cognitive, an openness that depends mainly on freedom. The ontological does not answer our requests, as objects do: Being cannot be known nor comprehended, but only *welcomed* (*accueil*) (Cf. BOLLNOW, 1984; RICOEUR, 1992). Being is there, already, it came first, before any questioning, and we just come too late and can only welcome it. Marcel himself called his philosophy a “metaphysics of hospitality” (1951, I, p. 232). Facing being, we are compelled to answer a Calling, to open ourselves to the Other. Metaphysics, thus, does not follow epistemology; in any case, it follows ethics (or even religion).⁷ Secondary reflection, the very instrument of metaphysics, is “for (*pour*) and due to (*par*) freedom”, and, as a “logic of freedom”, metaphysics faces an ultimate dilemma: either to *consent to Be* or to *refuse the calling* (*invocation*) of Being (MARCEL, 1967, p. 45). Experience itself pends on this constant risk of losing itself in the refusal of what it is given, or gaining itself *ab-an-donning* to presence. Metaphysics is, thus, the reflexive returning to the *Mystery of Being*, the very expression of our existential belonging to being. Existential consistency and meaning depends upon this reflexive *conversion* that accepts that belonging and being oneself are two sides of the same coin.

II Belonging: Incarnation, Intersubjectivity, Faith

To be is to belong, and existence is meaningless if not rooted in communion with another. Gabriel Marcel typifies this ontological belonging by referring to our different kind of experiences. Although experience is itself holistic, discerning types of belonging is but a heuristic tool to understand it. In the first place, we belong to a *world*, we are beings *in the world* (*être-au-monde*), and the notions of *situation* and of *incarnation* aim at understanding this

⁶ “La réflexion seconde, appelé quelquefois réflexion récupératrice, n’est pas autre chose que ce travail de rectification, au niveaux des concepts et de mots, par quoi la pensée tente de s’égaliser à ce que j’appelle dans mon ‘Argument’ les noyaux d’irréductibilité, constitutifs des expériences fondatrices. Ce rythme de pulsation, qui fait alterner le repérage des obstacles opposés à l’expérience vive, l’accueil de cette expérience (ou, comme on dira plus loin, de ces expériences cardinales), le travail du concept et du langage suscité par la restitution réflexive de ces expériences, définissent le style d’investigation parfois si déroutant de Gabriel Marcel” (RICOEUR, 1992, p. 50).

⁷ “Ce que j’ai aperçu en tous cas, c’est l’identité cachée de la voie qui mène à la sainteté et du chemin qui conduit le métaphysicien à l’affirmation de l’être; la nécessité surtout, pour une philosophie concrète, de reconnaître qu’il y a là un seul et même chemin” (MARCEL, 1935b, p. 123).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

belonging. The concept of *situation* questions Idealism's postulate of a transcendental subjectivity, which addresses the world from a *proscenium* without any real contact or commerce with it. To be situated means that one cannot un-tie oneself from the surrounding world, for the world is the ground of all our activities, including the one of thinking.⁸ There is a kind of "weakness" – a word that obeys, strictly speaking, to a certain conception of subjectivity as autonomous or autarchic- that *dis-poses* subjectivity, overthrowing subjectivity from its "cristal tower" and placing it in the midst of this muddy world. As being situated, one is turned inevitably available "to the thousand natural shocks flesh is heir to" (as Shakespeare would say). This availability (*disponibilité*) is illustrated by Marcel with the images of "porosity" and "permeability", which intend to show that nothing surrounding myself is strange to me (Cf. MARCEL, 1967, pp. 134-135). This familiarity and belonging to the world, that defines our being in situation, is grounded in our being embodied, in our being ourselves a body. *Incarnation* is the concept chosen by Marcel to make it clear that *we are in flesh*. To be incarnated does not mean that I have a body, as if my body were something I own, something I can dispose of, as if it were some kind of instrument. My body is an *index* of my own being, and one could not think on incarnation as a relationship between a Subject (I) and an Object (body). Since *I am my body*, this objective relationship is *inconceivable*. *I am my body* means, on the one hand, that I cannot consider myself without considering myself incarnated, that is, that there is no des-incarnated "I" which could refer to its body from the outside. In other words, my body is immediately present to myself and cannot be objectified. Incarnation is, therefore, not a problem, but a *mystery*. On the other hand, to be incarnated means that I belong to the world, that, as long as I am embodied, I am thrown into it. *I ex-sist* means that I am not self-enclosed, but essentially tossed outside myself. My body is the very place where this belonging to the world takes place, for I am thrown to the outside through my body, I offer myself in flesh to the other. The *mystery of incarnation* entails, thus, two consequences: my body is, at the same time, the *immédiate non-médiatisable* and the *médiateur absolu*.⁹ Incarnation is, therefore, the central *datum* of metaphysics, for nothing appears to us but affecting ourselves in flesh (Cf. GRASSI, 2009, 2011b).

Along with ones belonging to the world, one belongs inevitably to a community, that is to say, that one exists with other people (*avec les autres*). To be is to "be with" (*esse is co-esse*).¹⁰ To understand this inter-subjective experience, Marcel brings forth the two main categories: *availability* and *fidelity*. One could meet an-other in two different ways: as being an object or as being a "thou". I can always refer to the other as some-thing, consider *it* from the outside, as if it were an object that I can speak of, or that I can make us. But I can also let myself be affected by his presence, open myself to his coming, deploying my interests, my willing of control and possession. In the first case, we place the other within the "third person

⁸ "Le propre de l'existant est d'être engagé ou inséré, c'est-à-dire d'être en situation, ou en communication" (MARCEL, 1959, p. 153).

⁹ "Mais dès le moment où intervient mon corps en tant que mien, ou le sentir qui n'en est pas séparable, une perspective toute différente se découvre, et nous sommes alors mis dans l'obligation de reconnaître la nécessité de faire intervenir ce que j'appellerai un immédiat non-médiatisable qui est la racine même de l'existence" (MARCEL, 1951, I, p. 125). "Seulement cet immédiat serait en même temps médiation absolue, et ne serait in-médiatisable que pour soi" (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 241). "Si l'unité phénoménale de la personne est liée à l'existence d'un corps, son unité réelle ne paraît possible que si l'on pose une certaine immédiat non médiatisable pour soi, que je puis appeler sensation ou expérience fondamentale" (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 249).

¹⁰ "Consequently, the words *mystery of being* translate in a very schematic and therefore inevitably inadequate way the fact that as a thinking being I am involved in a vast communion, a vast *co-esse*, of which I can have, apart from a metaphysical assertion, only a fragmentary awareness through key experiences, to which indeed I must always direct myself if I do not want to bog down in general, sterile affirmation" (MARCEL, 1984, p. 274).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

perspective”, as if were an *It*.¹¹ In the second case, we call upon the other (*invocation*), welcome and greet him in a “second person perspective”. The other is no longer an *It*, but a *Thou*. As an object, the other person neither *affects* me nor takes me into account: I can be *beside* him without being *with* him. This preposition *with* (*avec*) has in Marcel’s philosophy a special ontological weight that signifies a level of intimacy that *dis-places* subjectivity from its *em-placement*, turning *my-self* available to the coming of the other that *con-stitutes my-self*.¹² However, to be affected by the other’s coming must not be understood within the scheme of the seal and the wax, as if receptivity were identified with mere passivity. On the contrary, to let the other affect me should be understood within the scheme of *hospitality*, that is as an active reception. To receive an-other *chez moi* is to make him part of my home, is to make him feel *at home*, which means that my own house is dis-posed by the guest. This is a creative receptivity, because the meeting of the *I* and the *Thou* is possible only as far as they both are turned into one another, being themselves as they are together.¹³ I can, thus, only *welcome* the other.

Once the intimacy of the “I and Thou” relationship is broken, one is exiled from the *We* (*con-formed* by the *I* and the *Thou*) and enter the realm of objectivity. One could say that there is only inter-*subjectivity* within the language of invocation, whereas within the indicative objective language one could only find inter-*objectivity*. Gabriel Marcel criticizes Jean-Paul Sartre’s metaphysical foundations because it grounded intersubjectivity not in *presence*, but in objectivity, and therefore examining intersubjective experience in the light of subject-object dialectics, that is, within the interplay of control and domination: either I turn into an object for the other, or the other turns an object for me. Sartre’s position on intersubjectivity could be well interpreted if one takes into account his strong “first person perspective” as the basic ground for his phenomenological ontology. For Sartre the *Us* is just a practical consequence of a plurality of individuals that work together towards one goal. Community itself does not have any metaphysical stance according to Sartre, and therefore intersubjectivity is not actually possible (Cf. MARCEL, 1946). On the contrary, for Marcel, the *Us* has an eminent ontological stance, for existence would not be possible if not shared. It is not the case, for Marcel, that the I-Thou relationship constitutes a *We*, but rather that both the I and the Thou appear as such –are con-stituted- within this grounding community of the *We* –what Marcel calls the *us-ness*.¹⁴ Within this communitarian regime, one finds the ongoing movement of

¹¹ The philosophies of Gabriel Marcel and of Martin Buber are very close in this respect, although they were built independently (MARCEL, 1964, pp. 59-60).

¹² “La conscience concrète et plénière de soi-même ne peut pas être héauto-centrique; si paradoxal que ce soit je dirais bien plutôt qu’elle doit être *bétéro-centrique*; c’est en réalité à partir de l’autre ou des autres que nous pouvons nous comprendre et seulement à partir d’eux...” (MARCEL, 1951, II, pp. 11-12).

¹³ “A la suite d’une conversation avec B. j’ai dû reconnaître qu’il est absurde de parler *du* « toi » et de prendre ainsi substantivement ce qui est au fond la négation même de toute substantialité. En réalité j’objective, après l’avoir isolé, un certain aspect d’une expérience qui est celle de l’intimité; je détache au sein du *nous* l’élément « non-moi » et l’appelle le « toi ». Automatiquement cet élément tend à prendre figure de *lui*; et c’est seulement dans la mesure où je réussis à revivre cette expérience après coup que je parviens à résister à cette tentation. Mais puis-je m’interroger sur l’immuabilité de ce « toi » sans le convertir en « lui »? « Toujours le même! » Cette exclamation spontanée n’implique-t-elle pas la rupture de l’intimité, l’évasion hors du *nous*?” (MARCEL, 1935a, pp. 293-294).

¹⁴ “Il faut prendre garde que c’est pour autant que je mets l’accent, non sûr l’idée de renseignements, mais sur celle de *réponse* avec ce que ce mot implique de communauté (*us-ness*) que le *toi* apparaît; je me rappelle avoir éprouvé cela nettement, avoir faite cette distinction pour moi en demandant mon chemin à un inconnu. C’est qu’en réalité les deux aspects que l’analyse dissocie (le *répertoire* et le *vivant*) sont indissolublement liés; et il ne faut jamais l’oublier sous peine de tomber dans l’abstraction et l’absurdité. Je crois donc qu’il faudrait approfondir le sens de cette idée de réponse qui est étroitement liée au *toi* et peut seule lui conférer un contenu (ici mes notes du 25 février sont utilisables). Au fond cependant, *toi*, c’est plus essentiellement ce qui peut être

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

appeal (*appel*) and response (*réponse*): the other calls me and, in this appeal, he request all my creative resources in order to respond his call and stay *with* him. Therefore, this belonging to a We entails an ethical dimension, although its ontological value is still grounding the ethical. This double movement of appeal and response is found in Marcel's description of *creative fidelity*, in which fidelity must be understood together with availability. Fidelity is neither determination nor persistence, like if fidelity were the same as constancy (*constance*); fidelity does not mean either to be loyal to oneself or to an ideal (and here is the basic difference between the philosophy of fidelity of Marcel and the philosophy of loyalty of Josiah Royce). To be faithful, for Marcel, is to stay open and respond to the other's calling, every time, in its particular situation. Being truly faithful is, thus, to be creative, answering the calling and keeping oneself open to the other. This creative dimension of fidelity is to be found in availability, for as one is *dis-posed*, one does not *stand* in his position any longer and become other. Moreover, paradoxically, only by being dis-posed by the other, one becomes oneself; only in belonging could we exist, for freedom is not about creating *ex nihilo*, but about responding creatively to the other's calling: freedom, far from being a *puissance de position*, is the capacity of answering a call. This is why Marcel claimed that "the more autonomous being is the more committed one" (1933, p. 87).¹⁵ Once and again, existence, subjectivity, has no meaning or consistency but in belonging.¹⁶

Understanding human existence, thus, within the "call and response" interplay, gave the opportunity to open philosophy also to religion, for existence is now interpreted within

invoqué par moi que ce qui est jugé capable de me répondre" (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 196). The word *us-ness* will appear later with the word *nostrité*. In another passage, Marcel uses the term *together-ness*: "Cette remarques très concrètes venaient nourrir ma réflexion [sur l'intersubjectivité]: je pense surtout à l'irritation que ne manque pas d'éprouver quelqu'un qui constate que deux autres personnes (par exemple) s'entretiennent à son sujet en sa présence, en disant de lui «Il» (*il est de telle façon, ou il a l'habitude de...*, etc.). Celui qui est ainsi visé se sent traité comme objet et comme rabaissé au niveau des choses ou disons même des animaux. Il est destitué pour autant de sa qualité de sujet. On pourrait dire aussi qu'il a le sentiment de ne pas être *avec* les autres, d'être exclue d'une certaine communauté à laquelle cependant il a la prétention d'appartenir. Dans une perspective comme celle-là le mode de relation désigné par la préposition *avec* apparaît en pleine lumière: mais s'agit-il bien en réalité d'une relation? Ce qui se présente à nous n'est-il pas plutôt une unité de type supra-relational comme celle que Bradley pensait trouver dans le *Feeling*? «Il suffit, écrivais-je, de réfléchir sur une relation comme celle que traduit le mot *avec* pour reconnaître combien notre logique est insuffisante et pauvre. Il est en effet susceptible d'exprimer des rapports d'une intimité croissante» à partir de ce qui n'est qu'une pure et simple juxtaposition. Si je suis simplement «posé» dans un compartiment de chemin de fer ou dans un avion à côté de quelqu'un à qui je n'adresse pas la parole et dont le visage «ne me dit rien», je ne peux pas dire que je suis vraiment avec lui. Nous ne sommes pas *ensemble*. Je note en passant que le substantif anglais *togetherness*, d'ailleurs inusité, n'a pas d'équivalent possible en français. C'est comme si la langue française se refusait à substantifier, c'est-à-dire en somme à conceptualiser, une certaine qualité d'être qui porte sur l'*entre-nous*" (MARCEL, 1964, pp. 61-62).

¹⁵ "L'âme la plus disponible est au contraire la plus consacrée, la plus intérieurement dédiée: elle est protégée contre le désespoir et contre le suicide qui se ressemblent et qui communiquent, parce qu'elle sait qu'elle n'est pas à elle-même, et que le seul usage entièrement légitime qu'elle puisse faire de sa liberté consiste précisément à reconnaître qu'elle ne s'appartient pas; c'est à partir de cette reconnaissance qu'elle peut agir, qu'elle peut créer..." (MARCEL, 1933, p. 87). One of the last conferences at Aberdeen is called "Fraternité et liberté" (MARCEL, 1964, pp. 177-198): "Dans la ligne de pensée qu'j'ai tenté de préciser au long de ces leçons, il est trop clair que la signification et l'enjeu qui sont ici évoqués ne peuvent être conçus que sur le plan de l'intersubjectivité ou, si l'on veut, de la fraternité, et peut-être d'ailleurs tout ce qui a été dit jusqu'à présent s'éclairera-t-il si nous posons en principe que l'homme le plus libre est aussi le plus fraternel" (MARCEL, 1964, p. 191).

¹⁶ "Il y a un sens où il est littéralement vrai de dire que j'existe d'autant moins que c'est plus exclusivement moi que existe – et qu'inversement j'existe d'autant plus que je me dégage davantage des entraves de l'ego-centrisme. Dès lors il serait philosophiquement absurde de dire que mon existence se présente comme un moyen d'accéder à mon être" (MARCEL, 1951, II, p. 36).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

the horizon of *gift* (*don*) and *grace* (*grâce*) (MARCEL, 2007). This leads us to the third experience of belonging, that is, the experience of Transcendence one can find in religion. Although the difference between God and Being is not very clear in Marcel's thought, it is clear that religion for him is mainly about addressing God personally. Whereas there is an (horizontal) I-Thou relationship between fellowmen, there is also an (vertical) I-Thou between men and God. The difference, however, is that God is not just a Thou, but an *Absolute Thou* an *Eternal Thou*. *Faith* and *hope* are the two main experiences were one could examine this belonging to the Transcendent. Even before his religious conversion, Marcel already noticed -against Cartesian and Kantian Idealism- that the fundamental formula that expresses subjectivity is not the formula *I think*, but *I believe*. *Faith* is the act by which one opens oneself to transcendence and acknowledges it as its ontological foundation –without, however, interpreting this foundation in terms of causality, but in an existential basis (Cf. MARCEL, 1935a, p. 53). As much as we consider ourselves as created, finite, we assume our “self” as altered, and this alterity as ours. The “ontological exigence”, the presence of Being within us, is religiously interpreted as our belonging to the Godhead, which is now (in Marcel's Judeo-Christian tradition) a Father. In God we trust, for God is the Absolute Thou that will stay forever available to our appeals, on Whom we can always rely. Religious belonging is, therefore, within the “second person perspective” language, and one would fail to understand Faith or Hope if one has an objective approach to them. Within religion, to believe and to hope are not, let us say, transitive verbs: the authentic religious formulas are not “I believe that...” (as in opinion), nor “I hope that...” (as in desire), but “I believe in...” and “I hope in...”. Faith and Hope are acts by which we abandon ourselves to God, this Wholly (and Holy) Other that will never run away from our invocation nor fail us. God is an *Absolute Thou* because She will never refrain from giving Herself to us.¹⁷ God's giving (*donation*) is so radical that implies my entire being in all its plenitude: my being itself is *given*, and the only thing that I must acknowledge, as Saint Paul did, is that “I do not belong to myself”, that I am but a holder of an absolute gift to which I can only respond to. This gift is *behind* any other gift because of its radicalness: if presence is to be given, one could find behind everything that is being given a grounding Presence, the Absolute Present (Gift). This is why, in Marcel's view, fidelity is grounded on this Presence, since giving oneself to the other is possible within a radical givenness that makes us present to each other (Cf. MARCEL, 1967, p. 249-250). Philosophy reaches its verge, and the Name of God runs towards the field of Religion (Cf. MARCEL, 1935a, p. 50). But faith and hope, philosophically speaking, points towards our radical belonging to an Absolute Presence which, giving Itself, awaits for our answer as a *consecration*, giving myself entirely in this response. The religious meaning of the gift entails that one becomes truly oneself in this kenotic act of absolute abandonment, in this exorcism of the *ego* thanks to which one gives away life in order to live truly. To exist is, thus, to belong to this Plethoric Reality of Absolute Presence, whose Name is only revealed historically in its religious figures, but Whose calling hits our “restless hearts” as an *ontological exigence*.

¹⁷ “Que serait-ce en effet dans cette perspective que désespérer sinon déclarer que Dieu s'est retiré de moi? Outre qu'une telle accusation n'est pas compatible avec la position du Toi absolu, on peut observer qu'en proférant, je m'attribue illégitimement une réalité distincte qui ne saurait m'appartenir” (MARCEL, 1944, 62-63).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel
GRASSI, Martín

III METAPHYSICS OF BELONGING: AN INHERITED TASK

The Other –as such, as being Other- is present. If there is no presence, there is no being, but just objectivity. And one can only welcome presence by opening oneself to it, by belonging (participation) with the Other to a community. The different ways by which we belong with the Other (incarnation, intersubjectivity, religiosity) are different expressions of a radical ontological belonging: we are, we belong to Being. Everything that *is*, is present, and the kind of community arouses differently depending on the kind of presence which one relates to. As Pietro Prini stated, we find in Marcel’s metaphysics an “analogy of presentiality” that structures the hole of human experience under the notion of *presence* (PRINI, 1963, p. 138).¹⁸ Analogy, however, does not mean that differences are subordinated to unity; on the contrary, in analogy is the difference that takes precedence over similitude. This is why is so important to discern properly the meaning of presence when we refer it to the world, to men, and to God. Nevertheless, beyond their differences, world, men and God reveal themselves as *being present*. First, we shall underline that this central notion of presence cannot be defined or characterized, for it moves at the level of immediacy: presence reveals itself to itself by itself. In this immediacy, moreover, someone is revealed to someone as it affects him. Therefore, time is the horizon within a real presence comes to be, or reveals itself. One can only well-come the coming being in time. Time, thus, is not an “a priori” form of sensibility, neither an objective characteristic of natural things; time has not an epistemological or cosmological meaning. Time has a phenomenological and existential meaning as it points to the *marching* of existence towards an Ultimate Revelation, that is, as it translates dramatically our impossible response to the calling of Being (*exigence d’être*) that makes itself present every time we encounter the Other. Only in present time, being is present, being makes itself present, *becomes* presence. According to Marcel, time must be understood as anchoring in presence, and therefore, past and future are only meaningful as far as they are articulated (*narrated*) in the present time (Cf. VIGORITO, 1984). Our temporal and living existence is neither fragmentary nor hazardous, but reassumed and unified continually in the present tense. At the same time, present is always tensed by the ontological calling of Being, which throws us ahead in the way of a project, or, even more, of a duty. Thus, the meaning of life is bound to this permanent writing of oneself as being tensed by the ontological, that is, as far as existence belongs to Being, to the Other. Life narratives are, therefore, articulated by those moments when the ontological (the presence of the Other) is instantiated –what Karl Jaspers would call *border situations*, *Grenz situation*). These situations are to be found within the experiences of fidelity, faith, love, death and hope: in all these experiences, the Other is

¹⁸ “Underlying everything is the blinded intuition –but this does not function as a premise from which other statements can be deduced. Rather it serves as a light which is shed upon and reflected by every concrete situation into which thought plunges afresh. And what this light discovers is in each case –*presence*. Every one of Marcel’s ‘central concern’ formulas brings out in a different way the notion that philosophy is nurtured by an experience of presence. Ultimately this presence can only be an absolute presence. It is true that other persons and even things can be felt as presences, but our experience of presence infinitely overflows them. Pietro Prini has described Marcel’s philosophy, with his approval, as an ‘analogy of presentiality’. It is a good phrase, because it conveys quickly the basic character of his metaphysics. The primary analogate in an analogy of presentiality must manifestly be a person –since a presence which is only a *what* is not yet a full presence. This means that the real metaphysical question is not ‘What is being?’ but ‘Who is there?’ Metaphysics is the ‘science’ of answering this question” (GALLAGHER, 1962, p. 119).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

calling (even in the case of death, for, according to Marcel, what really matters is not my own death, but the death of the loved one).

Within these experiences, Being calls for belonging: either one rejects the appeal, or one accepts it.¹⁹ Our life and temporal experience depends deeply on our response to the calling. If rejected, time encloses itself within the stretch walls of *ego-centrism* and turns itself rigid. If welcomed, time opens itself to the coming Other and flows along with it. In this welcoming, time itself is *renewed*. Creativity is the mark of presence: where something is present –where something is given–, there is novelty and event, for appeal and response are co-creative.²⁰ According to Marcel, in this experience of welcoming the Other and belonging to/with the Other, transfigures time itself: from a constant falling into nothingness, time is now turned into the constant possibility of plenitude. In welcoming the calling for belonging, one finds the experience of *supra-temporalization*: *chronos* is turned into a *kairos*, that is, a meaningful and open time within which existence is resumed (Cf. MARCEL, 1951, I, p. 210). Within the experience of the *mystery of Being*, that is, within the existential experience of belonging to Being with the Other, life is no longer “a tale told by an idiot”. The way of Metaphysics comes along the way of sanctity (Cf. MARCEL, 1935b, p. 123), for responding to the call of the Other entails to be freely available and commit oneself to the Other, sacrificing oneself to the Other in the name of community. Only embracing the Other one abandons the deathly illusion of autarchy and becomes responsive (Cf. MARCEL, 1967, p. 45). And only in responding to the ontological calling, can one live and exist meaningfully, within the horizon of Plenitude.²¹ To be is to be with (*Esse est coesse*): that is the metaphysical password.²² In order to ground this radical belonging of existence to community, Marcel coined the word *usness* (*nostrité*).²³ Conceiving the ontological realm as if it were a kind of social and interpersonal belonging, sets Metaphysics on a quite new scenario. By this move,

¹⁹ “The *disponibilité* that Marcel views as the hall-mark of personal responsiveness is in fact a disposition freely to commit oneself in response to the ontological exigency embodied in human fellowship, which is recognised as the fellowship of Being” (O’MALLEY, 1984, p. 285).

²⁰ “L’exigence métaphysique rapprochée de l’exigence de création” (MARCEL, 1959, p. 145). “Créer n’est pas essentiellement produire; on peut produire sans créer, et aussi créer sans qu’aucun objet identifiable demeure comme témoignage de cette création. Nous avons tous connu, je pense, au cours de notre existence des êtres qui étaient essentiellement créateurs; par le rayonnement de bonté et d’amour émanant de leur être ils apportaient une contribution positive à l’œuvre invisible qui donne à l’aventure humaine le seul sens susceptible de la justifier” (MARCEL, 1951, II, pp. 46-47).

²¹ “L’être, c’est la plénitude” (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 177). “Notre activité demande à s’exercer dans du plein. Le bonheur, l’amour, l’inspiration: c’est, je crois, en fonction de telles expériences que le problème de l’être peut se poser de façon intelligible. Seulement c’est d’être qu’il s’agit, non de l’être” (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 202). “Au fond c’est toujours l’opposition du plein et du vide –infiniment plus essentielle que celle de l’un et du multiple” (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 179).

²² “... [L]a présence est intersubjective, elle ne peut pas ne pas s’interpréter comme expression d’une volonté qui cherche à se révéler à moi; mais cette révélation suppose que je ne lui fasse pas obstacle; bref, le sujet est traité non comme objet, mais comme foyer d’aimantation de la présence. A la racine de la présence, il y a un être qui tient compte de moi –qui est pensé par moi comme tenant compte de moi: or, par définition, l’objet ne tient pas compte de moi, je ne suis pas pour lui” (MARCEL, 1959, p. 164).

²³ “Je dis quelque part « ce qui fait fonction pour moi de source de renseignements est dans cette mesure même un toi ». Il faut prendre garde que c’est pour autant que je mets l’accent, non sur l’idée de renseignement, mais sur celle de *réponse* avec de que ce mot implique de communauté (*us-ness*) que le *toi* apparaît; je me rappelle avoir éprouvé cela nettement, avoir fait cette distinction pour moi en demandant mon chemin à un inconnu. C’est qu’en réalité les deux aspects que l’analyse dissocie (le *répertoire* et le *vivant*) sont indissolublement liés; et il ne faut jamais l’oublier sous peine de tomber dans l’abstraction et l’absurdité. Je crois donc qu’il faudrait approfondir le sens de cette idée de réponse qui est si étroitement liée au *toi* et peut seule lui conférer un contenu (ici mes notes du 25 février sont utilisables). Au fond cependant, *toi*, c’est plus essentiellement ce qui peut être invoqué par moi que ce qui est jugé capable de me répondre” (MARCEL, 1935a, p. 196).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

Marcel brings together not only ontology with Ethics, but also with “religion”. The way in which a community is made in articulating Men-God-World, and the way in which Being is revealed in Its calling, opens the door to the two-sided and mutual influence from metaphysical thought to religious, and viceversa –a door that was also opened by other prominent philosophers in the early XXth century, such as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber.

Although Gabriel Marcel’s philosophy set up a scenario in French philosophy where existential thought was not opposed to ontology, and where philosophical research was not separated from religious questions, his metaphysics were not conceptually strong enough. Marcel’s main limitation, I believe, is his refusal of objectivity and of mediations in order to preserve the immediacy and the non-objectivity of existence. Marcel is an intuitive thinker, a very sharp exegete of human experience, but he was unable to offer a rigorous philosophy that could stand up for his proposals. The lack of attention to mediations, to the *institutional* dimension of existence, kept the realm of history, politics and religious studies out of his sight. Marcel betted on the singular existential perspective and built up his whole philosophy in this narratives –a powerful and insightful narratives, of course! I would say that Marcel’s existential philosophy was in need of a hermeneutical approach that could offer a conceptual frame to his intuitions. One could find the power of this association between existential and hermeneutical thought in one of his greatest disciples, Paul Ricoeur. Existence, indeed, cannot be understood only in the immediacy of presence, as long as presence itself must be grasped through its mediations: in the realm of thought –that is the realm of human life-, we cannot get rid of mediations, of language. Philosophy must try to conceptualize the superior intelligibility of existentiality (*existentialité*), avoiding the everlasting temptation of speaking in a quasi-mystical language. As Marcel refuses the metaphysical competence of concepts, he fails to make the *meta-problematical* sphere intelligible. His philosophical work stands on the binomical tension between poles (existence/objectivity, presence/object, immediacy/mediation, problem/mystery, Being/having, etc.) that are not embraced in their dialectical relations, but rather confined to a question of *aut... aut...*, that is to say, to an irreducible and inflexible option. This need to choose one of the terms of the binomial in despite of the other, is the Achilles heel of Marcel’s philosophy.

However, despite his weaknesses, Marcel’s philosophy seems to have an enormous role to play in our contemporary debate. His work undertake the task of conceiving Being in a relational scheme, rearranging the whole of philosophy not in the terms of Selfhood or Alterity, but in the terms of “Usness” or “being together”, enabling a philosophy of *community*. Not only his work has a historical interest as far as it shaped some of the greatest philosophies in France (Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur and Levinas were influenced by Marcel). The main interest today in Marcel’s philosophy should be a philosophical one, for one could find in his “metaphysics of usness” a certain alternative to the “philosophies of alterity”. As Brian Treanor (2006) describes it, Marcel’s philosophy is a promissory alternative to think alterity, selfhood, time, and event.²⁴ On the one hand, the central intuition of Marcel

²⁴ “So it seems that Marcel’s conception of otherness does not fit neatly into the all-or-nothing choice that postmodernity offers us. We can think of Marcel’s notion of otherness, illustrated by the image of constellations, as being demarcated by two assertions. Firstly, Marcel’s characterization of otherness is not absolute; that is, whatever we say of the other, we should not assert that the separation of the other from the self is absolute. Rather, there is an underlying unity that links the same and the other, allowing for relationship. Secondly, however, we must add that the other always eludes any attempt by the self to comprehend, grasp, or otherwise pin it down. There is no possibility of comprehending the other, and the unity that links the same and the other can never be a totality (TREANOR, 2006, p. 382). “Absolute otherness is not prior or more

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel

GRASSI, Martín

is that neither selfhood nor alterity can be understood without taking into account communion: neither self is shuttered in itself, neither alterity is absolutely strange (both being the two sides of the same coin). Neither the Thou, nor the I can ground existence in belonging. The insurmountable paradox of the one and the other impels to inhabit the tension between both, the tension that is named belonging (*participation*), *usness*.²⁵ In other words, Marcel's philosophy is but a radical approach to the ontological meaning of "being-with", an approach Jean-Luc Nancy (1996) has taken over nowadays.²⁶ Facing this task, Marcel brought together metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of religion. These three roads, in their differences, converge in assessing the centrality of community. Far from epistemology and cosmology, Metaphysics is now renewed by these other discourses, and one could expect some great things to come out of this new partnership: Gabriel Marcel gives a considerable testimony of the richness of this exchange, an exchange that is at the core of ongoing philosophy.

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fundamental than relative otherness; it is an abstraction that comes after the encounter with the other, which would not take place at all if the other were absolutely other. Having abstracted alterity from the chiasmic crossing with similitude in which it is always encountered, philosophers of absolute otherness speak as though alterity and similitude were, like oil and water, both distinct from and independent of each other. While the first point is legitimate, the second is not" (p. 390).

²⁵ "Mais une semblable prise de position met immédiatement en relief le caractère essentiellement anti-cartésien de la métaphysique vers laquelle nous allons avoir à nous orienter. Il ne suffit pas de dire que c'est une métaphysique de l'être, c'est une métaphysique du *nous sommes* par opposition à une métaphysique du *je pense*" (MARCEL, 1951, II, p. 12). "Marcel précise l'essence de la présence en tant que communion, dans la formule d'Édith [en su obra de teatro *L'Insondable*]: « Cette vie, ce n'est pas moi, ce n'est pas lui non plus: c'est nous deux ». Il la précise encore quand, à propos de la fidélité créatrice, il remarque que cette communion est celle d'un *coesse* authentique. Ce *coesse* authentique que formule le mot « avec » transcende la dualité dichotome du « devant moi » et du « dedans moi » qui n'appartient qu'au monde des relations objectives et problématiques" (HANLEY, 1976, p. 221).

²⁶ "Avec moi: notons ici la valeur métaphysique de ce mot avec, qui a été si rarement reconnue par les philosophes et qui ne correspond ni à une relation d'inhérence ou d'immanence, ni à une relation d'extériorité. Il sera de l'essence –je suis obligé d'adopter ici le mot latin – d'une *coesse* authentique, c'est-à-dire, d'une intimité réelle de se prêter à la décomposition que lui fait subir la réflexion critique ; mais nous savons déjà qu'il est une autre réflexion portant sur cette réflexion même, et qui se réfère à une intuition sous-jacente aveuglée mais efficace et dont elle subit le magnétisme secret" (MARCEL, 1933, p. 82).

Existence as belonging: the existentialism of Gabriel Marcel
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