

AN EXISTENTIAL INTERPRETATION OF  
GABRIEL MARCEL'S PLAY:  
"THE BROKEN WORLD"

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摘 要

馬賽爾是本世紀與海德格、雅斯培、沙特齊名的存在哲學大師。其作品分哲理和劇本兩類，極富原創性。執當代詮釋學牛耳的呂格爾教授(Paul Ricoeur)曾自稱師承馬塞爾及胡塞爾，然因兩師之出發點及強調之不同，致使兩者有迥異之發展。馬氏重視臨在和主體際性。胡氏用存而不論法追索意義，最後走入獨我主義的死胡同。然胡塞爾之方法對詮釋學實有啓示，此尤在其徒海德格之著作上可見一斑。馬塞爾亦被史家譽為現象學家，因在探討人生現象上有巨大貢獻。本文除檢視馬氏與現象學關係外，尚選其名劇「破碎世界」加以詮釋，為凸顯馬氏存在論的特色，藉之使讀者了解詮釋學的應用法及現象學的多元性。

INTRODUCTION:

This essay is intended to be incorporated into a series of studies on hermeneutics or the science of interpretation. The focal point then must be the technique of hermeneutics and how it can be exemplified through a particular work of an author. I have chosen "The Broken World", a play by Gabriel Marcel as a vehicle by which I shall try to expound the theory of hermeneutics. Secondly I shall also show how Marcel's philosophy is illustrated in his literary work.

Hermeneutics has its own history. We can easily select some names to point out its development. Dilthey, Schleiermacher, Bultmann, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur come to mind. Hermeneutics is somehow attached to the revival of biblical studies as well as to a particular philosophical trend: viz., existential phenomenology. The latter was initiated by Husserl who himself was not an interpretative theorist. However his thought lent itself to the birth and growth of hermeneutics. His dis-

ciples Heidegger and later Ricoeur became the main propounders of the hermeneutic school. Both of them had the distinct marks of two apparently opposed philosophical backgrounds: phenomenology and existentialism. Heidegger himself was one of the great figures of existential philosophy in our century, while Ricoeur began his philosophizing in the presence of G. Marcel, the earliest existential philosopher in France. It was only later that he immersed himself in the work of Husserl. Hence Heidegger applied phenomenology to existentialism as an interpreter of *zein* and *dazein*, while Ricoeur deepened existentialism with interpretative language and phenomenological insight. Both of them made a synthesis of the two different philosophical disciplines and tried to give birth to something original. It seems apparent that if we want to associate anyone with the hermeneutic movement, we should first show how far he is related to the phenomenological movement, or at least to the existential movement. Otherwise, he might be a good thinker, an original philosopher, but only attached to the trend of hermeneutics in a wider sense.

This is why in this paper we shall try to see how far G. Marcel can be said to be a phenomenologist first. Then we will expound the object, the content and the method of his hermeneutics.

### I. Gabriel Marcel: is he a phenomenologist?

Apparently, *sensu stricto*, he is not. The precursors of phenomenology Brentano, Stumpf etc., its founder Husserl, its leaders Scheler, Heidegger, Hartmann, Landgrebe, Fink etc. were Germans. Later, French philosophers such as Levinas, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur etc. joined this group but only after a trip to Germany where they made a thorough, personal and serious study of the above-mentioned phenomenologists. It seems that this is not true in the case of Gabriel Marcel. Marcel in his period of research had never gone over the French frontier. He read indeed quantities of German books, philosophy and literature and he quoted Heidegger, Jaspers and even Husserl, but he seemed to have been little influenced by Husserl. Perhaps this was due to their different ethos, interest, style of life and reflection. We may say that the main concern for Husserl is still the problem of epistemology, while for Marcel it is life! Why then did H. Spiegelberg, the author of the renown book "The Phenomenological Movement"<sup>1</sup> dedicate a chapter to Marcel and put it at the head of the French phase of the movement? In this very chapter we find the answer. Besides, Paul Ricoeur in his article "Gabriel Marcel et la phenomenologie", delivered during the *Entretiens Autour de Gabriel Marcel*<sup>2</sup> (24-31 August 1973), only two months before the philosopher's death, clarified also the similarity and the

difference between Marcel and Husserl. Ricoeur clearly more favors Marcel. This fact shows that Ricoeur inclines more to the existential side rather than to the epistemological side of philosophy. Ricoeur as the hermeneutic leader in our time seems to be willing to enlarge the notion of phenomenology that even if a philosopher has no direct connection with phenomenology but scrutinizes the phenomena of existence deeply, he is not alien to phenomenology. He certainly agrees with Spiegelberg in what the latter writes in his chapter on Marcel:

The *Metaphysical Journal* is certainly revealing about the way in which Marcel's mind operated. It shows him at his best when he recorded his fresh amazement in front of a new phenomenon never touched by other philosophers before him, posed new questions, was struck by new perspectives, or stopped by difficulties, which he never minimized. For his chief concern at this level was not to suppress phenomena. In all these respects the *Journal* shows the features of genuine phenomenology: the zest for finding new and neglected phenomena, the effort to make them stand out, and the ability to find new angles in, and new approaches to, the perennial issues.<sup>3</sup>

If then Marcel is a phenomenologist, he is very different from Husserl, even from other phenomenologists, existential or not, due to his originality in content and in style.

Paul Ricoeur in the above-mentioned article made a lucid analysis of his two Masters: Marcel and Husserl:

... depuis plus de trente ans, je poursuis avec mes maitres. Il se trouve en effet que c'est la meme annee, en 1934 exactement, que je decouvris Husserl dans *Ideen I* and Gabriel Marcel dans le *Journal Metaphysique* . . . . Depuis lors, je ne cesse de m'acquitter d'une double dette; c'est parallelement que j'ai mene la traduction en francais de *Ideen I*, publiee en 1950 et que j'ai ecrit mon livre Gabriel Marcel et Karl Jaspers, publiee en 1948.<sup>4</sup>

These few lines show clearly how Ricoeur, he himself now recognized as a Master by the western philosophical world, considers himself always indebted to the two Masters, inspirers of the earlier period of his philosophical career. The creative ideas and the non-conventional methodologies of Marcel and Husserl haunted young Ricoeur and decided the latter's horizon of philosophizing. What then are the essential contents of the two phenomenologists? To what extent they are similar or different? And why does Ricoeur incline more to Marcel's side in his evaluation of them?

Spiegelberg enumerates many phenomena which Marcel's philosophy has touched: death, suicide, life, the sacred, anxiety, body, having, engagement, participation, witnessing, availability, belonging, creative fidelity, encounter, family etc.

Paul Ricoeur concentrates his attention on one particular phenomena: *avoir* (having). To him the distinction between what one has and what one is, illustrates best a new type of metaphysics. Because of the interior relation of the human body to his being, the margin of being and having is transcended. *My Body* is not a having of mine which I can possess, but is implied in the possessor. *My body* is co-possessor of my subjectivity. *My body* possesses all my havings with me. *My body is me, I am incarnated*. This fact reveals the immediate participation of one particular kind of having into being. Marcel calls the having-implication. Later on, he calls it mystery in opposition to problem. The *my body* is implied in my subjective core. The relation of the having-implication with the one who has is the relation of being. The relation of being has the character of being *impossédable, incharactérisable, irréductible* and *metaproblématique*. Following the notional analysis, Marcel proceeds to its existential application. Here he compares two opposite types of existing: the having-type (with the desire to have and the fear to lose) and the being-type (*co-esse*, intersubjectivity, presence, love).

Ricoeur sees in such an analysis, elements common to Husserl's emphasis in his phenomenological approach and method, namely "le sens de la description, le gout de l'analyse eidétique, voire l'art des variations imaginaires"<sup>5</sup>. However immediately Ricoeur points out that they differ in their very initial gestures. This is the problem of *reduction, épochè* and *abstention*. In order to make the eidetic sense come to the fore, Husserl requires the searcher to suspend his credits to the natural reality temporarily, putting the natural feeling, belief, or better the existential tie in parentheses. The object now is viewed in the flux of the consciousness as the noematic pole of its intentionality. The convergence of multiple intentional acts constitutes the identity of the object whence the sense of the object can be derived. On the other hand, the subjectivity of the subject is discovered also in the intentionality. The ego intends to a sense in the temporal flux of the consciousness. The reduction reveals a subject not in a successive time, but a power "inscrit dans la visée même de quelque chose, que la conscience a de retenir une impression passée et d'anticiper une expérience à venir"<sup>6</sup>. The subject and the object are correlated as *noèse-noème*, homogeneous in the same intentional flux of consciousness. The sense is what is intended, not what the consciousness is. Ricoeur calls the Phenomenology of Husserl a philosophy of the sense<sup>7</sup>.

The initial gestures of the two thinkers are easily demonstrated. For G. Marcel, it is the having-implication (according to Ricoeur); for Husserl, it is the reduction. Though both of them try hard to grasp the *eidos* of the phenomenon through intuition, description or reasoning, the content and the result of their research are very

different. The reflection on the phenomenon of Having brings the author to realize the inalienable nature of being. The experience *prelogique* of the presence precedes the act of doubt. The full meaning of existence can only be revealed in presence, a situation engaged, participated in the immediate. This primordial experience is presupposed by an act of knowing and meaning-attaining process. The existential revelation of the other is not an objectively valid, isolated, independent ego, but a *thou* or a potential *thou* in the intersubjective presence. The correlation takes place in the existential area, not inside the consciousness. The intentionality tends towards the real otherness, rather than the *noème*. The lived and living situation differs from the *logical situation* of Husserl which Marcel characterizes as "l'insularité que la pensée confère aux objets par rapport à soi"<sup>8</sup>. Insularity is nothing but disruption of the presential relation. Reduction as far as an act to put the existential tie into parentheses implicates such a disruption. The irreducible presence is reduced in order that a valid, objective reality may come to light. Reduction in this sense becomes a powerful machine to serve the objectivation, to increase the content of the objective totality. There the notions of distance, detachment, uprootness (*déracinement*) come in. Ricoeur does not hesitate to say: "La réduction ne peut être qu'une variété du *déracinement* dont souffre toute la pensée moderne."<sup>9</sup>

It seems that the philosophy of Marcel wants to reserve a place for the "sacred" being, irreducible to any epistemological endeavor. This is the so-called primacy of being (or existence-value) over objectivity. The phenomena of the lived body, of thou, of the deep feeling, of the existential experience are such. They are refractory to the logical thinking. Once objectified, they are no more. Hence, the reduction or *épochè* as method to found a scientific basis of knowledge does not favour the full bloom of the existence which is the main concern of G. Marcel.

Another cardinal point to compare the two thinkers is the notion of intersubjectivity. Husserl's *personal subjectivity* is unlike that of Kant. According to Ricoeur, Husserl's concept of subjectivity is "partagé entre une universalité de droit qui répond à sa fonction épistémologique de légitimation dernière, et une singularité de fait qui résulte de sa constitution foncièrement temporelle; c'est ce paradoxe qui a suscité le thème de l'intersubjectivité; si le sujet doit être fondement dernier, et si le sujet doit être singulier, reste seulement possible une fondation en quelque sorte collégiale, oecuménique, ou la communauté virtuellement illimitée des sujets porte la charge de l'universalité."<sup>10</sup> Because of the temporal nature of the husserlian subject, only a community can guarantee its universality without which the subject discovered at the end of the process of the reduction can not function as the knowing basis. But how to find the community endowed with a scientific validity? The answer is

the perceptive world. Here is the common world for the community of the subjects. But the perceptive world as in principle should be put in parentheses to illumine the intuited essence. This method involves a paradox. Instead of searching the inter-subjective reality, it tries to establish a radical and transcendental ego and a *my world*. The solipsism can not be overcome. Because the perspectives other than mine are put into parentheses. The ego and the other ego are insulated. The experience of the ego is the sole original experience, while the experience of the other is derived. Paul Ricoeur remarks: "... l'analyse de Husserl apparaît ... comme une entreprise de dérivation génétique ou le solipsisme initial est confirmé plus que vaincu". He adds: "Si l'on ne part pas de la présence irrécusable de l'autre, on ne rejoindra jamais cette présence."<sup>11</sup> From here on, Ricoeur's position in favor of Marcel becomes more clear. Intersubjectivity is not a notion as such, but existential reality. It is a lived truth. This phenomena seems to be treated adequately only in the writings of an existential thinker, Marcel. Here lies the particular contribution of the existential phenomenology of G. Marcel.

For Marcel, the reality of the other ego is not detected nor derived, but felt, shared in the experience of love, fidelity. Ricoeur mentions with great admiration the invention of the palpitating vocabulary: "*toi*". "Il ne dit pas l'*autre*, dit-il, l'autre moi, comme dans une perspective épistémologique, mais *toi*; ce beau mot, emprunté au vocabulaire de l'invocation, est la marque même du changement de front."<sup>12</sup> *Le toi comme nom de l'ego* inaugurates altogether a new metaphysics of being. This is a metaphysics of communion, of the inextricable relationships of human beings; in short, it is a dramatic display of human existence. In the drama, the living subjects in dialogue are not abstracted. Their originalities are preserved. Each of them speaks out their thought and feelings without being transformed into a representative of the theory of *toi*. The drama of human existence unfolds itself spontaneously, without a pre-designed project. Words, actions, thoughts are intermingling and appear in existential unity. As a result we observe the irruption of the *pensée pensante* and *parole parlante*, the creative thought and new wording, the birth place of wisdom, meaning and value. The subjects engage themselves in the same drama, looking for a truth delivering them from an often hopeless situation. The *we-ness* replaces the ego. Ricoeur remarks, "L'*ego* issu de la réduction (husserlienne) sera un penseur désintéressé et, en ce sens, désengagé."<sup>13</sup> Now the whole picture of the Marcel-Husserl comparison becomes crystal clear. The existential exploitation of human reality overpasses the narrow concern of husserl's phenomenology. Hermeneutics finds its position and hierarchy of evaluation. We hear at last the authoritative judgement of Ricoeur that the interpretation of human

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phenomena finds its objectivity more in the existential approach, that is the concrete intersubjectivity-experience rather through the process of the epistemological reduction.

Until now, we have tried to bring out the interrelation between G. Marcel and the phenomenological movement. We have used Paul Ricoeur's article to explain the different approaches and methods of Marcel and Husserl, and the consequent theories on subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The phenomena of human existence is more satisfactorily described by Marcel. Without having been a disciple of the founder of Phenomenology, Marcel is truly a phenomenologist, as Jean Hering remarks:

We believe we may affirm that, even if German phenomenology (to suppose the impossible) had remained unknown in France, nevertheless a phenomenology would have been constituted there; and this, to a large extent, would be due to the influence of Gabriel Marcel.<sup>14</sup>

Besides, just because of the different styles of Marcel and Husserl, the former need not liberate himself from the idealist impasse as did the disciples of Husserl, notably Heidegger and Scheler.<sup>15</sup> Rather Marcel approaches the problem of being directly through an interpretation of human existence. For him there is a pathway from being to Being. If Marcel has the phenomenological connotation, it is because he interpretes the phenomenon, in other words, it is because his is a hermeneutic *sui generis*. Thus we justify our selection of this thinker as a writer relevant to our actual concern: to learn the theory and the praxis of hermeneutics through the text-studies of various writers.

### II. An example: "The Broken World".

"The Broken World" is a play in four acts, published by G. Marcel in 1933 with an appendix which is the famous article *Position et Approches Concrètes du Mystère Ontologique*. This article was a lecture delivered to the Philosophical Society of Marseille in the 21st January of the same year. The importance of the article is judged by the fact that it is the first systematic expression of his thoughts which until then were jotted down in a diary form. Etienne Gilson compares it to Bergson's article *Introduction A La Métaphysique* as two most important manifestations of French philosophy in this century<sup>16</sup>. However, Marcel on many occasions points out emphatically that his play precedes his philosophy. We believe that it would be better to let the Play speak out itself rather than to construct a thesis and to fit the

Play into it.

The Play contains a story. Christiane Chesnay, before her marriage, loved a young man who, just as she was going to confess her love to him, announced that he was going to become a Benedictine monk. From that moment, nothing seemed to matter for her; her life had lost its meaning, and she did not feel she was doing anything wrong in consenting to become the wife of Laurent, whom she did not care for particularly, but who was deeply in love with her. To distract herself, Christiane flings herself madly into a gay and brittle social round; she has beauty and wit, she fascinates everybody who comes near her; her husband, who is a dim, dull sort of person, suffers from wounded vanity because nobody ever takes any notice of him, except as his wife's husband. Christiane discovers after a time that Laurent is meanly jealous of her social success. And that he would rejoice to see her humiliated and rejected. Through a sort of ill-directed charity she hastens to give Laurent this satisfaction, pretending that she is deeply in love with the musician Antonov, who ignores her. But she feels a sort of horror when she becomes fully aware of the effect this lie has had on her husband. Alone and lost and obeying a kind of irresistible impulse, she suddenly gives herself to a young man (Gilbert) who is in love with her and whom she had never taken seriously. It looks as if she is likely to elope with her lover and thus sink for ever into the world of emptiness and illusion. However she had by this time had news of the death of the Benedictine monk, who is the only man she ever really loved. But just at this critical moment, the monk's sister (Geneviève) comes to see Christiane, and tells her a very strange story. The young monk alone in his cell had learned in some way, perhaps through a dream, of Christiane's love for him. At the same time there had been abruptly awakened in him a mysterious sense of responsibility for her, of paternity according to the spirit. "At a given moment in his life", says the sister, "he became aware that the same act which for him was one of self-surrender to God for you signified despair and—who knows?—ultimate perdition. And from that moment he prayed with all possible ardour that to you, too, it should be given to see the light."<sup>17</sup> Christiane reacts against this sanctified love, so different from the purely human love she had wished for. But little by little the light breaks through and it is the light of what Marcel calls the second reflection. She becomes aware at last of the truth within her own deepest nature, the truth against which, not wishing to recognize it, she had struggled. She perceives that it is not her real soul that has been animating her life, but a caricature of that soul, a false charity, all of whose commands were lies. And in the light of this inner revelation, even her relations with her husband are given a new foundation, she acknowledges how guilty she has been; there is a communion of



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sinner, as well as a communion of saints, and without doubt it would be impossible to separate the one communion from the other.

The above paragraph is essentially taken from Marcel's own words when he delivered a series lectures in Aberdeen, England in 1949<sup>18</sup>. The center-figure of the Play is a thirty-three-years-old charming lady. Apparently she lives in an admirable situation. She has a well-to-do family with her husband and a son. She has a good girl friend from childhood, Denise. And she has two close male friends: Henri, also a friend from childhood, two years older than her, and Gilbert, five years younger. These persons together with her father and the musician Antonov constitute her intimate world. She has a respected social standing. Many persons, male or female, admire, adulate or love her. From all points of view, she should not be considered a poor creature. But money, relationships, reputation, success, talents, entertainment, . . . cannot give her the fulness of being, the real joy and peace, the interior unity of her personality. The above enumerated points are the *havings* which man can possess, yet the having as such doesn't increase man's being. Being is *co-esse*, interior union of persons, availability in true love. Christiane is aware of this fact, so she can say:

Don't you sometimes have the impression that we live . . . if we can call it living . . . in a broken world. Yes, broken as a broken watch. The spring stops functioning. Apparently nothing is wrong. Everything is fixed in its place. But if you take it near to your ear . . . you will hear nothing. You understand, the world, that which we call the world, the world of men . . . formerly it should have had a heart. But now we could say that this heart stops beating . . .<sup>19</sup>

In fact, Christiane is not talking about the world in general, but of her own little world where "everyone has his own corner, has his own little business, his small interests. They meet, they shock each other and make terrible noise . . . . There is no more center, no more life, nowhere."<sup>20</sup> In her small world, she doesn't find those who love and adore her attractive enough to appease her soul. She can listen to them, tolerate them and work with them, but she cannot enter into deep relationships with them. She admits: "I love nobody."<sup>21</sup> However there is still hope, because she still desires to be desired, to be loved, to meet and to give tenderness. In her conversation with Laurent, her husband, she expresses several times that she needs a real friend, hoping Laurent could be such a friend. "You can't let me come near to you, you steal away . . ." "From what?" asks Laurent. "From my . . . my tenderness."<sup>22</sup>

Poor Laurent! Is he really at fault? Does he ever refuse loving her? I don't

believe so. The problem is that Laurent could never come near to her. They don't share their interests, their hearts, their friends, their milieu. In fact, Laurent has no friend, no personal milieu. He could not enter into his wife's milieu. He is a *he*, a topic of their conversation, not a *thou*. Laurent admits also that he loves no one. He is a solipsist in truth and in appearance while Christiane is a solipsist in truth only. The loneliness poisons their daily life. This is the cause of sadness, despair and the sense of absurdity. Why cannot two persons vowed to love each other for life meet? What is the mysterious element which can re-unite the broken world together? Or perhaps the broken world does not situate itself primarily in the interpersonal level, but in the interiority of a person. The individual is no more in-dividual (un-divided), he is broken, his spring of inner life stops working. He cannot be his own savior. He needs an *Other*, a new energy to raise him up, to unite himself, to heal him, to revitalize and resuscitate him. This can be called the ontological exigence or the need of being. Not having, but being saturates human thirst. Without being, man lives an empty life, he *is not*.

Most of Marcel's plays develops in an intense dialectic tension. The personalities engage themselves in an endless discussion which seems to enlarge the breach more and more. But a complete breakdown can be avoided if they allow a foreign element to come to their rescue. This is the mystery of intersubjectivity. Man needs an other to save himself. The efficacy of the intersubjective aid does not requires a spatial immediacy. There is a bond between human spirits touching their deep roots invisibly. The *I* is rooted in *we*. Only in *we* the *I* exists. Man can not survive in total loneliness. He should be nourished by the real concern of other and he is willing to accept this concern. The aid is not a part of the other, a having of someone, but his own self, his presence, his whole being. Marcel calls this "a kind of influx" as he says:

It depends upon us to be permeable to this influx, but not, to tell the truth, to call it forth. Creative fidelity consists in maintaining ourselves actively in a permeable state; and there is a mysterious interchange between this free act and the gift granted in response to it.<sup>23</sup>

From where should Christiane find this gift to re-integrate her broken self? What kind of influx should come to her rescue? What kind of love will heal a wounded soul and enable him to venture a mortal leap--a leap from the impossible situation of non-existence? The Play gives us an answer of these questions that the help comes from a sacrificial love, from a selfless *thou*, from an eager prayer which incorporates even the one who prays. This is Dom Maurice whose name was Jacques

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Decroy before his entering into the Benedictine Monastery. This particular person who has caused a broken world in Christiane, now comes to recreate her.

Actually Jacques never appears on the scene. He is mentioned here and there specially by Denise in connection with some records of the sacred music registered in Solesmes (name of the Monastery). It seems that the mere mentioning of the name Solesmes is enough to cause a deep chill on her. Jacques, a brilliant young man<sup>24</sup>, would have fascinated many more young women than Christiane. They were friends from a very tender age. Then the mysterious call to a wholly consecrated life came to Jacques. Without knowing the interior sentiment of Christiane, he entered the Monastery and shut himself inside pursuing his goal of evangelical perfection. One could imagine reading through the whole Play that even if Christiane had avowed her love to him, he would not change his mind. However the vocation of the boy is too big a blow to be endured by the girl. Her interior unity seems to be torn apart. The spring of a watch stops beating. She survives the event but has no more energy to recreate her future. Her true self, or her being vanishes with the physical disappearance of Jacques from the world. Christiane *is* no more. Her life becomes an assemblage of parts and events. Her real self is *absent* from the scene. Her marriage, her social gatherings, her artistic accomplishments, her enjoyments cannot redeem her. The endless exchanges of words with friends and husband are mere words, not bringing them to the intimacy. This is the inefficacy of mere dialectics. Lies replace the truth, blur the vision and block communication. Men are thrown back on themselves. *Thou* does no more exist. Everyone lives for himself, with a little project for a short period. No wonder that in such a world reign despair, suicide, betrayal, dishonesty and in a larger scale, killings, war, imperialism and dictatorships. However being does not forsake its role. It does not allow itself to be suppressed, but transforms itself into an affirmation of being in which the ontological need is fully expressed:

Being is--or should be--necessary. It is impossible that everything should be reduced to a play of successive appearances which are inconsistent with each other ("inconsistent" is essential), or, in the words of Shakespeare, to "a tale told by an idiot." I aspire to participate in this being, in this reality--and perhaps this aspiration is already a degree of participation, however rudimentary.<sup>25</sup>

The need and the affirmation of Being is the counterpart of the hold of being (la prise de l'être) on us. The last breath of hope comes from the conviction that *being is*, that being will never abandon me. Because of her former intimacy with Jacques, Christiane lives still in faith shared with a beloved thou.

Christiane. --Le reste est affaire entre moi et moi-même et peut-être Dieu, si Dieu Existe, et vous savez, après tout, je ne suis pas si sûre que Dieu n'existe pas. J'ai toujours l'air d'être avec vous tous, comme vous tous qui ne croyez à rien, qui vous moquez de tout, sauf de la mort et de la souffrance, car vous en avez une peur affreuse; oh! je ne dis pas ça particulièrement pour vous, mais en realite, il y a en moi un être que je ne connais presque pas et qui n'est sûrement pas . . . un des vôtre . . . un être qui se cherche, et qui se trouve en des secondes bien rares du reste, dans un monde inconnu auquel on dirait que vous n'appartenez pas.<sup>26</sup>

This unknown being resides in the soul of Christiane and now by a sacrificial act of love will redeem her soul. The visit of Geneviève, sister of Jacques, brings the Play to its climax.

Geneviève heard the news of Denise's suicide, came from afar to reveal the story of Jacques on his death-bed. She hopes that the truth can save Christiane from self-destruction. Geneviève herself not an extraordinary personality plays the role of intermediary. Her words and sincere behavior won the confidence of Christiane. They entered into a real dialogue where a new light shone forth. We will choose some of the conversation of the last two scenes of the Play to illustrate the recovery of being.

Geneviève. --Je l'ai toujours su. Oui, a Cimiez quand je vous voyais ensemble . . . vous n'étiez pas comme avec les autres, vous étiez différente . . . je ne puis expliquer . . . silencieuse, comme éblouie.

Christiane, (tres bas.) --Eblouie . . . vous avez raison.

Geneviève. --Et puis, ce qui a dissipé tous les doutes que j'aurais pu avoir encore, c'est que . . . je vous avais rencontrée la veille du jour où il vous a appris qu'il allait entrer dans les orders. Et je vous ai revue le lendemain de ce même jour. Vous n'avez eu besoin de me faire aucune confidence. J'ai toujours gardé ces deux images au fond de ma mémoire: l'une était celle de la joie, de la confiance . . . l'autre . . .

Christiane. --Ainsi vous . . . vous seule!

Geneviève. --Vos parents, vos amis n'ont rien soupçonné!

Christiane. --Nous voyions peu de monde à Cimiez. Maman s'est probablement doutée de quelque chose. Mais je suis tombée malade aussitôt après. Sans doute, cette maladie était-elle s'y est laissé prendre; je n'ai trompé personne. Ah! vous ne pouvez pas vous imaginer . . . à l'instant précis où il m'a déclaré qu'il serait moine, j'allais, moi, lui dire que je l'aimais . . . De quel amour, oui, vous l'avez deviné . . . Ebloui . . . Cette minute-là a glacé toute mon existence. Depuis . . . depuis, je ne me possède plus . . . je ne sais plus qui je suis. (Un silence.) Je ne m'étais juré que personne jamais . . .<sup>27</sup>

With the delivery of the secret, the true self is shown to the other and to her-

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self. This is the first time since the painful departure that Christiane faces her true self. And this the moment she can receive the truth of another side.

Geneviève. -- Christiane, mon frère a connu votre amour.

Christiane. -- Lui!

Geneviève. -- Il l'a connu, mais plus tard, quand cette révélation ne pouvait plus offrir de danger pour lui, parce que toutes les hésitations étaient depuis longtemps derrière lui, parce qu'il ne pouvait plus être tenté.

Christiane. -- Pourquoi appelez-vous cela une tentation? Nous aurions été si heureux. (Elle fond en larmes.) Je ne comprends pas à quoi tout cela a été sacrifié. . . je ne veux pas . . . je ne peux pas . . .

Geneviève. -- Votre amour, mon frère l'a porté comme sa croix pendant les derniers mois de sa vie, il l'a offert.<sup>28</sup>

But how did the situation change? Geneviève read the diary of her brother after his death and found that in a dream she later became aware of the damage he might cause to Christiane.

Geneviève. -- Un rêve tout ordinaire, je pense, rien qui ressemble à une vision. Comprenez-moi, Christiane, ce rêve ne l'a pas troublé, mais c'est comme s'il avait éveillé en lui à votre endroit . . . je ne sais comment exprimer cela . . . le sentiment d'une responsabilité mystérieuse, oui, comme d'une paternité selon l'esprit. A une certaine minute de sa vie, il a vu que l'acte par lequel il s'était donné à Dieu avait peut-être signifié pour vous le désespoir . . . qui sait? la perte. Il ne pouvait pas en être ainsi. Et depuis cet instant, il a prié ardemment pour que vous fussiez à votre tour éclairée, pour qu'il lui fut permis . . .

Christiane, (passionnément) -- Je déteste tout cela . . .

Geneviève. -- Christiane, est-ce que vous ne sentez pas que toute une part de vous-même, la plus précieuse, la seule précieuse . . .

Christiane, (avec ironie) -- Mon âme.

Geneviève. -- Votre âme justement. A-t-elle habité votre vie?

Christiane, (comme malgré elle.) -- Non, pas elle. Sa caricature. Une fausse charité qui ne m'a dicté que des mensonges. Un faux amour qui allait peut-être . . . (Un silence.) C'est comme une brusque lumière que je ne peux pas encore regarder. Geneviève, est-ce que ces choses existent? (Elle la regarde avec une sorte d'avidité dévorante dans l'interrogation.) Vous êtes comme tout le monde, comme tous les gens qu'on rencontre. Il n'y a aucun signe sur votre visage, rien que cette expression . . . qui me fait peur. Je me rappelle autrefois, nous trouvions que vous aviez l'esprit lent et que vous étiez trop patiente; comme si vous ne sentiez rien. Vous ne compreniez pas nos plaisanteries; ça m'agaçait et Jacques riait quand je le lui disais. Et à ce moment-là, quand j'ai appris . . . je vous ai détestée parce que vous n'aviez pas l'air triste. Et votre mariage plus tard. Tout le monde a dit: Geneviève épouse un bellâtre.

Ca aussi ça m'a paru . . . On ne comprend rien, on ne connaît personne . . . Et c'est vous qui me présentez maintenant cette espèce de flamme, cette vérité qui pourrait tuer et dont il faudra vivre? Qui vous envoie, Geneviève? qui, dites-le moi.<sup>29</sup>

Knowing that it was the suicide of Denise which caused Geneviève to decide to come, Christiane realizes that there is a chain of events and existence. But she doesn't believe that the two worlds, the broken one and the un-broken one, may cross. Hers is the broken one. Here Geneviève reveals her own problem, she needs help too. The husband of Geneviève is seriously sick, most probably incurable. She is tempted to tell him the truth hoping that he will kill himself and thus end the endless suffering of many. So she prayed not to fall into this temptation. She needs the prayers of others too. When she asks Christiane to pray for her, she brings the latter to another world, the un-broken one, the world of Jacques, the world of the immediate.

Geneviève. -- J'ai prié, oh! sans ferveur, presque par habitude . . . La tentation s'est dissipée. Mais je suis sûre qu'elle reviendra, je le sais . . . Christiane, il faudra prier pour moi.

Christiane. -- Prier?

Geneviève. -- Vous avez un répondant.

Christiane. -- Geneviève, est-ce qu'il me voit?

Geneviève. -- Il vous voit, et en ce moment, vous le savez. (Les deux femmes s'éteignent silencieusement.)<sup>30</sup>

The deep communion of two beings brings them to participate in the fullness of another world. There they recharge the energy of their beings. The silence is a sign of the ultimate recovery, a union of souls beyond words. Laurent enters; Geneviève asks for leave. The new Christiane says with a deep gravity: "Geneviève . . . J'essaierai de faire pour vous ce que vous m'avez demandé." It is the turn of Christiane now to contribute her part to the salvation of the world, giving energy and hope to others through the invocation of the divine (the absolute presence and the universal thou).

The last scene of the Play depicts the reconciliation and the mutual surrender of the couple. The liberated soul of Christiane can face the truth and bring it to fulfilment. She accepts Laurent as such. Laurent is recognized as a real thou. They have a real dialogue. The past fault is not from one side. Both should overcome their mutual feeling of being separated. With the aid of being and the crying intervention of the beloved near the Absolute Love, the couple finally give birth to a *we*, existence intersubjectively participated.

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Christiane. -- Comme moi, j'ai mérité ce que je souffre en ce moment. J'ai honte pas seulement pour moi. Pour nous deux.

Laurent, (amèrement.) -- Nous deux, est-ce que ça existe?

Christiane. -- Ta faute, c'est ma faute; ta faiblesse, c'est la mienne; mon . . . péché, si ce mot a un sens, tu en as aussi ta part . . .

Laurent. -- Péché! . . . décidément cette visite . . .

Christiane. -- Nous ne sommes pas seuls, personne n'est seul . . . il y a une communion des pécheurs . . . il y a une communion des saints.

Laurent. -- Cette visite . . . quel rapport? que voulait cette femme?

Christiane, (troublée.) -- Je ne peux pas te l'expliquer . . . plus tard, je te le promets.

Laurent. -- Il y a donc encore un secret . . . Oh! d'ailleurs, maintenant . . . Tu est libre . . . S'il te plaît de refaire ta vie avec cet individu . . . je ne t'en empêcherai pas.

Christiane, (profondément.) -- Laurent, je suis ta femme.

Laurent. -- Je ne sais pas . . . je ne comprends pas . . . tu m'as trahi, et je n'avais jamais douté de toi.

Christiane. -- Mais à côté de cette confiance que je t'inspirais, il y avait un autre sentiment . . . une espèce de haine? N'est-ce pas? Il t'est arrivé de souhaiter ma mort . . .

Laurent. -- Tu comprends, si je t'avais perdu . . . j'aurais pu au moins pleurer. Ma souffrance aurait . . . respiré. Ta présence l'étouffait. Et maintenant . . .

Christiane, (avec solennité.) -- Je te jure que je n'appartiens plus qu'à toi . . . je suis délivrée . . . C'est comme un rêve insoutenable qui s'efface. Il ne dépend plus que de toi . . .

Laurent, (dans une sorte de vision.) -- Ah! c'est comme si tu m'étais rendu après ta mort . . .

Christiane, (humblement.) -- Ce mot-là, je vais maintenant tâcher de le mériter.  
(Rideau)

The broken world revives, the heart beats again, the center re-functions. The new *elan* of existence is no doubt paid for by the monk praying in the dark, offering himself for the redemption of the lost soul. And this prayer becomes efficacious the kind, humble intermediary Geneviève. Here I believe that I have to bring in the notion of a *Saint* to properly conclude this essay.

Conclusion:

The *Saint* is a man (or woman) like any man. He may have sinned and may possess many faults. His personal history is not necessarily composed of innocent record of angelic stories. However he dedicates his life for the sake of others, making himself a pure thou. He might choose a life apparently very lonely. He does

not often participate the richness of human associations. He may even be forgotten altogether by the world, and by the media. However he *is* among us, more than anyone else. He redeems the *thous* by sacrificing his personal *thou*. In his solitude, he gives energy, life and hope to the lonely ones. The saints are "les seuls qui, grace à leur amour absolument désintéressé, soient susceptibles d'affecter le *toi*."<sup>31</sup> "Nul plus que le saint qui prie dans la solitude n'accède au nous"<sup>32</sup>. The solitude of the contemplatives is communion. Their detachment is a participation, the highest possible one<sup>33</sup>. For this participation is produced in the center of the reality, completely excluding curiosity with regard to the universe. The saints then are the incarnated gratuity and disponibility, opening without reserve to the Absolute Thou, and meeting all human beings in the very root of his own existence. The saints are ready to suffer, to die for others that others may live. They don't belong to themselves. They don't have selves. They sacrifice the beloved in order that all can become their beloved thou. In the price of their being, they liberate being from having, they increase for others the chance of living. By nature, the saint is a brother, a *fraternel toi*. The broken world badly needs saints to be its saviors. This is the message of G. Marcel's Play.

## NOTES

1. H. Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, third revised and enlarged edition, 1980), pp. 448-69.
2. *Entretiens Autour de Gabriel Marcel*, (Neuchatel: La Baconniere, 1976), pp. 53-74
3. Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, p. 463.
4. *Entretiens*, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 65.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
14. Spiegelberg, *op. cit.*, p. 448.
15. The author of this paper has no intention to underestimate the value of Heidegger and Scheler in making a comparison with the above-mentioned and Marcel. He simply wants to emphasize their different orientations in searching for the meaning of being.
16. Etienne Gilson, ed., *Existentialisme chretien: Gabriel Marcel* (Plon, 1947), p. 2.
17. *Cinq Pièces Majeures*, (Plon, 1974) p. 211. Translation is mine.



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18. Gabriel Marcel, *Mystery of Being*, vol. I, (Chicago: Gateway, 1960), pp. 168-69.
19. *Cinq Pieces Majeurs*, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
23. Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, (N.Y.: Citadel Press, 1966)
24. *Cinq op. cit.*, "C'était une intelligence remarquable." p. 184.
25. *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
26. *Cinq op. cit.*, p. 156.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 209-10.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-12.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.
31. *Journal Métaphysique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1927), p. 218.
32. *Présence et Immortalité* (Paris: Flammarion, 1959), p. 160.
33. *Etre et Avoir* (Paris: Aubier, 1968) Vol. I, p. 22.
34. The word "saint" described by Marcel has, no doubt, a religious connotation. He understands a saint as one who is called by God to love and to help others. However in different cultural milieus, religiosity, in the strict sense, may not be the necessary presupposition of an authentic, sacrificial love.