

Marcel Studies

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to introduce the seventh issue of *Marcel Studies*. First published in 2016, the Journal continues to flourish and we are grateful for the support of all those working on Marcel's thought around the world, for the many friends of Marcel, and also for the growing number of new scholars who are drawn to this ideas in recent years. We all share the belief that many of Marcel's themes continue to offer profound insights to us today as we struggle with many challenges, and we are happy to continue to promote fruitful interdisciplinary scholarship related to his work.

The first article in our current issue deals with a cutting edge theme. Many have become concerned recently about the continued progress of artificial intelligence machines, along with their spinoff capabilities and their prospects for future impact on culture and life. One worry is how to control the influence of such technology and how and whether its spread can be influenced by more human values, such as those found in Marcel's work. Geoffrey Karabin's article explores a dialogue between the philosophy of Marcel and one aspect of the broader artificial intelligence debate, the school of thought known as transhumanism. Transhumanism operates on the premise that humanity ought, as technology develops, to increasingly seize control of our biological destiny, a theme that is becoming more common today and one that requires the engagement of philosophers.

Karabin argues that the transhumanist project in general seems to exist in diametrical opposition to an approach like Marcel's. He explores this transhumanist-Marcelian dynamic by way of the theme of the afterlife and its possibilities. For Marcel, hope for the afterlife arises most especially in response to the value found in intersubjective love. Within transhumanist discourse, by contrast, the afterlife becomes a vehicle to achieve the fullest extent of individual autonomy, based on a belief in ever-expanding technological advances and what they could make possible. Navigating his way through this apparent clash of views in a fascinating and insightful discussion, Karabin's adopts a generally irenic approach and suggests that some common values may exist in both approaches--the experience of existential value for Marcel generates a hope for the afterlife, whereas for transhumanists this value drives the effort to overcome death.

In our second article, James Lisowski pursues an interdisciplinary study; specifically, he offers a reading of American novelist Walker Percy's novel, *Lancelot*, through the lens of Marcel's notion of creative fidelity. Lisowski's aim is to explore the theme of intersubjective relations, and how it can illuminate our understanding of Percy's novel. While recognizing that the

protagonist of the novel disastrously fails in terms of intersubjective relationships, Lisowski explores the question of whether hope might still exist for him even after the awful horrors depicted in the novel, thereby raising a key question that is more pertinent in contemporary society than ever: the question of whether redemption is possible for everyone, even those who appear to be incapable of reform, or who even appear to be undeserving of it.

We also include two book reviews, one on recent work by Gregory Sadler relating to Christian philosophical debates in France, and one introducing a new translation of Marcel's play, *Thirst*, by Michial Farmer. Be sure also not to miss our "News and Views" section, which includes information about a new Marcel Institute, an upcoming conference and a new Journal, some information about Marcel's correspondence, a timely reflection from Marcel on the question of life, death, experience and reflection, as well as a report on recent scholarship of interest to our readers.

A reminder that *Marcel Studies* is an on-line peer reviewed, international Journal dedicated to furthering understanding and appreciation of the work of Marcel. We welcome submissions from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives on topics and themes that pertain to any aspect of Marcel's thought. We encourage younger scholars especially to submit their work to the Journal. The editors will make a special effort to work with younger scholars in an attempt to bring the fruits of their scholarship to a worldwide audience. The aim of our Journal is not only to promote, but to encourage, Marcel scholarship, and, keeping in mind also that the Journal is interdisciplinary, one of our goals is to help prospective authors in a variety of fields to bring their work to publication.

Thanks to all of our readers and members of the Gabriel Marcel Society for their continued interest and support. Don't forget to check out the Society's website, which is part of the Rockhurst University website. For those wishing to become a member of the Society, please send an email to the address below.

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