

Marcel Studies

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Greetings again to all Marcel scholars around the world, and to all friends of Marcel and fellow travelers! I am very pleased to introduce what is now the eighth issue of *Marcel Studies*. There is no doubt that Marcel's ideas are still relevant to our contemporary concerns in any number of areas, from worries about the effects of technology, to responses to the modern epidemic of alienation and loss of meaning, to the effects of war and destruction on the human race and on our planet, to the continued attempts to understand the nature of the human person.

This issue opens with my article, which considers the experiential and philosophical dimensions of human life in the existentialist tradition, especially in the work of Marcel, and with special regard to the problem of evil and suffering. Marcel, and the existentialists in general, have always been somewhat ambivalent toward a purely rational or philosophical approach to certain topics, making the argument that there is a vital experiential dimension to life that a purely conceptual approach cannot adequately capture. This way of expressing the point brings out well the paradoxical nature of their position, because, while wishing to emphasize the profundity and importance of this experiential dimension, they are in some way also making a (conceptual) argument! And their task then is to develop a consistent, rationally defensible position that is supposed to have some objectivity to it, while at the same time showing the limits of a conceptual analysis (some were more successful at this than others). The article explores these themes by means of a discussion of the existential and philosophical problems of evil, and the relationship between them. These general issues are, I argue, ones that Marcel did not develop sufficiently. I attempt to probe various ways that his view might be extended, as I engage with some of the key questions raised by the general existentialist approach to knowledge.

In our second article, Alexander Montes explores the relationship between two key themes in Marcel, fidelity and freedom. He is especially interested in the ways in which fidelity appears to put restrictions on our choices. Montes develops his argument in terms of a consideration of similarities between Marcel's views and those of Dietrich von Hildebrand. He introduces the concept of "self-donation"—giving oneself to something or someone that is regarded as intrinsically good—in order to bring out the objective nature of the human person that freedom allows us to express. The relationship between freedom, fidelity, value and human nature are all timely notions for our contemporary debates, and Montes' study is a very perceptive contribution to these topics.

In this issue, we also introduce a new section of "Philosophical Notes." It is intended to include important analyses, reflections, and briefer scholarly pieces that make a high quality contribution

to our understanding of topics related to Marcel's thought, such as conference discussions, review essays, short reflection pieces, scholarly exchanges and replies, We start off the new section with an insightful set of reflections by Michael Healy, based on his paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gabriel Marcel Society, in Houston, TX, in November 2023. Healy's remarks focus on the timely topic of the contrasting attitudes of hope and despair (followed by commentary from Geoffrey Karabin).

This issue presents three book reviews, on recent work by Paul Marcus, who brings an interdisciplinary perspective from psychoanalysis to bear on a comparison of the work of Martin Buber and Marcel; Joe Fossati reviews a collection of essays on the topic of the notion of "problem" in twentieth century French philosophy, while Margaret Hughes reviews Steven Keeper's new book on the notion of wonder in the work of William Desmond, and his engagement with a number of European thinkers, including Marcel.

Our "News and Views" section is one you will not want to miss! It includes a fascinating overview of the archives of the Gabriel Marcel Society, news about recent scholarship (including new books by Geoffrey Karabin, Paul Marcus, and Maria Traub), a report on the inaugural conference of the Gabriel Marcel Institute of Philosophy, Sydney, as well as a call for papers for their October 2024 conference. Also: in what context did Pope Francis appeal to Marcel's work? See "News and Views" for the answer!

We are grateful for the support of all of our contributors and readers over the years, and we encourage those working on Marcel to consider submitting their work to the Journal. I want to remind all potential contributors 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 bring their work to publication.

For those wishing to become a member of the Society, please send an email to the address below.

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