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NEWS AND VIEWS

FAREWELL TO K.R.





Professor of Philosophy, Marcel scholar of world renown, founding member and past President of the Gabriel Marcel Society, Katharine Rose Hanley, 87, passed away, Sunday, Oct. 13th, 2019 in Falmouth, Mass., following a lengthy illness. The funeral Mass was held at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Falmouth, with her great friend and colleague, Fr Dan Mulhauser, S.J., concelebrating (pictured above, on right, with K.R., and with Paul Tracy, Le Moyne Alumnus).

Known as K.R., Professor Hanley taught at Le Moyne College, Syracuse, NY, from 1961 until her retirement in 1997. She served as chair of the philosophy department from 1968 to 1973. K.R. came to Le Moyne at the invitation of Donald Monan, S.J., then chair of the philosophy department who would go on to serve as president of Boston College, and Robert Mitchell, S.J., then dean of Arts & Sciences who later served as Le Moyne's 10th president. She met both men while studying at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium.

"K.R. was a remarkable scholar, teacher, author and person," said Linda LeMura, president of Le Moyne College. "Her work brought her worldwide acclaim, yet she always remained the down to earth person who impacted generations of Le Moyne students. Her remarkable career made her a true trailblazer in the world of academia."

It was while at Louvain that she first met Gabriel Marcel, when he lectured at the university. They met again in 1965 when he came to Le Moyne to lecture and receive an honorary degree from the College, one of the highlights of K.R.'s career. They had an especially meaningful conversation at Marcel's home in Paris in September 1973, just three weeks before his death,

when he inscribed his book *Five Major Plays* to her with these words: “In remembrance of a spiritual bond which once renewed shall not be broken.”

K.R. lectured extensively in the U.S. and at various national and international philosophical meetings in France, Canada, China and Japan. Her first book, *Dramatic Approaches to Creative Fidelity: A Study in the Theater and Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (1987), announced and illustrated her perspective for appreciating Marcel’s work, and became the definitive study of his theater. She then published translations (and commentaries) of seven Gabriel Marcel plays, including two audio CDs performed by professional actors. *Gabriel Marcel’s Perspectives on The Broken World*, published in 1998, comprises the play *The Broken World*, his essay “Concrete Approaches to Investigating the Ontological Mystery” (which includes an extensive and very impressive footnote commentary by K.R.), and several appendices listing Marcel’s biblio-biography, his dramatic and philosophic works in French and their English translations, his books as drama critic, and titles of his musical compositions.

K.R. received an associate’s degree from Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart (1954), and her bachelors (1955), masters (1958) and doctorate of philosophy (1961) from the Catholic University of Louvain. She was named a National Endowment of the Humanities fellow in 1973 and received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Le Moyne in 1997. Amid all of her extraordinary professional accomplishments K.R. was also an expert skier, and often enjoyed skiing with Father Monan, Father Mulhauser, and other Le Moyne faculty and students. Her love for the sport led her to found the College’s Ski Club in the 1960s.

Contributions can be made to the K.R. Hanley, Ph.D Scholarship Fund at Le Moyne, which was created by former students and friends in honor of K.R. to benefit students who have excelled academically while working outside jobs.

[adapted from K.R.’s obituary published by Le Moyne College Public Relations Office]

Brendan Sweetman Reflection:

For many years in the USA, Katharine Rose Hanley was the foremost scholar, disciple and promoter of the Marcel’s work, and she rightly earned recognition as one of the foremost Marcel scholars in the world. I well remember meeting her for the first time at the Marcel Society meeting at the ACPA in 1992 in San Diego. She was extremely welcoming to me as a younger Marcel scholar, and was very supportive of my work through the years. K.R. always went out of her way to help people interested in Marcel pursue their research. In her own work, she had a particular interest in Marcel’s theater, and many years ago started the Marcel theater project.

K.R. noted that The Marcel Theatre Project started at Le Moyne in 1974 with a full scale staged production of *The Rebellious Heart* in Grewen Auditorium. This premiere was followed by stage performances of *Dot the I* and *The Double Expertise*, then a video production of *The Lantern. Colombyre* or *The Torch of Peace* and *A Man of God* had popular performances in the form of Readers Theatre. After the 10th anniversary of Marcel’s death, these plays were performed for audiences of various philosophical societies’ meetings across the U.S. and Canada, including at

Princeton University. In Fall 2005, *The Lantern* was performed with striking success at Johns Hopkins University with John Astin (of *The Addams Family* TV series) as Director and also playing the role of the Father, while the other roles were portrayed by members of the Master in Liberal Arts Program. Dr. Hanley was on stage following this performance with the Producer, Director, Actors and Dean of the Masters in Liberal Arts Program, to share her insights and comments in response to questions regarding Marcel, this play, and the developing clarification of existential questions in Marcel's own life through dramatic imagination and reflection. The sponsors of this event chose a Marcel drama, not only for its theatrical merits, but also because his plays engage the developmental psychological tasks of the university age student: friendship, commitment, fidelity and creativity. K.R. noted that Marcel is one of the rare dramatist/philosophers who addresses these topics.

Over the years, K.R. has published the following on Marcel:

Hanley, K.R. *Dramatic Approaches to Creative Fidelity: A Study in the Theatre and Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel*. Lanham, MD. U.P. of America, 1986. (The complete text of this important book is available on the Marcel website at Rockhurst University under "Resources").

-----"Marcel: the Playwright Philosopher," *Renascence*, Vol. LV, No. 3 (Spring 2003): 241-258.

----- (ed.). *Two One Act Plays by Gabriel Marcel*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986.

----- (ed.). *Gabriel Marcel's Perspectives on The Broken World*. Milwaukee: Marquette U.P., 1998.

----- (ed.). *Two Plays by Gabriel Marcel*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988.

----- (ed.). *Ghostly Mysteries: A Mystery Of Love And The Posthumous Joke*. Milwaukee: Marquette U.P., 2004.

----- (ed.). *Gabriel Marcel, A Path to Peace: Dramatic Explorations by Gabriel Marcel* (Five Plays) (Marquette U.P., 2007)

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MARCEL IN IRELAND

(Irish poet Desmond Egan reflects on a lecture he attended by Marcel, given at Maynooth College in 1959)

For many years, Gabriel Marcel has been for me—along with Simone Weil—a philosopher who matters. I am taken by the way in which he avoids abstract theorizing in favour of the living detail of life; his insistence on philosophy as engagement (which poetry should also be, instead of journalism, which it often—usually?—is); his reverence for the particular moment. Although

he became a Catholic, he refused to judge others out of respect for the uniqueness of every human situation. He intended, as he put it, to,

Deeply distrust dogmatism of any kind—without, of course, being a sceptic.

There can be discerned behind this distinction the depth of insight which could suggest that,

... a life of labour dedicated to one's children implies a certain kind of transcendence.
(*Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, 1973)

Though earlier in his career he accepted the description, he later objected to being described as an Existentialist—and did so when I heard him speak. For Sartre and his followers, since there is no God, we are condemned to fashion our own morality, our own world-vision, leading to a position where,

Lived atheism seems to imply the total absence of scruples, a ruthless single-mindedness in the struggle to possess material goods or reputation (*ibid*).

—to what Marcel described as “systematic moral occlusion.” He, on the other hand, having come to believe in a Creator, believed too in some fundamental order in existence, some objective morality which he balanced against his respect for the complexity of human experience and his distrust of judgment-systems. This is why he is so important. In a century broken by wars and horrors, the Holocaust, the atom bomb, the ensuing collapse of belief in value—also identified by Simone Weil as the single greatest disaster of modern times—Marcel persists in believing in transcendent human norms. For him, freedom is a challenge, not a sentence. He does not reject the spiritual as part of the human experience.

So when I heard that Marcel was coming to Ireland to give a lecture on the topic, *What can one expect of Philosophy?*, I made sure to go and hear him. The year was 1959 and he spoke in a packed Callan Hall in Maynooth College. He was introduced by a Professor of Philosophy and when Marcel began to speak, I was struck by the difference between a bright, intelligent, explainer of ideas, and actually being a philosopher. It is analogous to teaching creative writing (if that is ever possible) as distinct from being a committed poet.

Marcel's style of delivery was clear, slow and deliberate—but never dull. One soon recognized that he had a sense of humour—identified by the audience as when he referred to a boring lecturer droning on at his “more or less acquiescent” students. (I have never met a genuinely serious person who did not have a sense of humour: Samuel Beckett being a good example.) When Marcel spoke, he spoke with such involvement and at such a depth that you could imagine bringing him a problem, some complex or puzzling idea, to think through for you—as you might ask a plumber to solve a leak. I have never heard anyone since speak with such authority. His gentle voice has remained with me and his lecture has become one of those standards by which one judges every other. I was sorry that, as an insignificant student, I did not get a chance to shake his hand and speak to him afterwards. Some of my student friends were less impressed, when we met next day—and were flippantly jokey about the event, as callow youths will. I became quite annoyed, and still remember how vehemently I disagreed and argued

with them, to the point, almost, of having a falling-out. He was, simply, my hero—at a time when I needed one.

And has so remained. I have since read and pondered over any Marcel books which were translated, never hesitating if I came across one in a bookshop. I also made a point of acquiring the issue of the Irish Jesuit journal, *Studies*, in which that Maynooth lecture was published, and have been refreshing my memory now with it. It brings back the excitement, can I say the magic, of that moment. It remains in my mind, a reminder paralleled by the discovery of Dostoevsky, or encountering the poetry of Hopkins, or hearing Sibelius for the first time...

What, then, can one expect of Philosophy? The very question, Marcel pointed out, is trivializing. It brings to my mind Marcel Duchamp's answer when asked what was "the answer," the solution to the whole human dilemma: "There is no solution because there is no problem!" Marcel began on a similar note, dismissing the question—suggested to him for a lecture in Oslo—as indicative of "a shallow kind of neo-positivism." It implied that philosophy, the pursuit of wisdom, was an intellectual exercise like any other university subject. Genuine philosophical pursuit—he went on to say—demands "engagement," some kind of total personal involvement; just as artistic work does. (I was not very surprised to discover, later, that Marcel was also a playwright—to greater effect than Sartre was a novelist—and deeply knowledgeable about music as well.) The perception that philosophy is not a game but an involvement is central to Marcel's philosophy. It demands a commitment without which philosophy becomes no more than an intellectual exercise, and "loses itself in words."

Since it involves a certain personal intensity, it follows that without such the pursuit dries up and does not deserve the name, philosophy. (The Greek roots of the word philo-sophia suggest a lovingness, a full involvement.) On that basis, Marcel would crucially distinguish between an "enquiry: and a "search." He made a comparison with the work of an artist: there is a personal experience but the true artist goes deeper and through the particular can search out some general, i.e., objective, truth. As in great music, this quality can be universally recognized, whatever the individual response. And, as in art, so in philosophy; the roots lie in personal response to something particular. We are not far here from Wordsworth's "emotion recollected" or Patrick Kavanagh's aim (in his poem, *The Hospital*) to,

Snatch out of time the passionate transitory

or, in Marcel's words, a "not taking reality for granted" even though the philosophical response or attempt to understand is at a deeper level than the initial experience.

It follows, Marcel pointed out, that this necessitates some kind of dialogue with other philosophers of the past—if only to clarify one's own perception. True to his initial assertion, he regularly questioned his own statements, entering into a kind of Platonic conversation with his listeners and refusing to dogmatize. Nor was he slow to admit that his thought has defined itself with help from the thinking of others, even from disagreement with some.

Philosophy, the pursuit of truth, arises from a need to understand. Marcel accordingly dismissed from a height what he described as the "waste-matter of philosophical thought"—the kind which one meets in newspapers and other non-serious writing. It is the responsibility of philosophers to burn such waste as one would any household garbage! (Again, that sense of humour).

Coming towards a conclusion of his hour-long lecture, Marcel spoke memorably of philosophy as “the adventure of human thought” and as such, its character of being always in response to some question, some individual need. Any system such as that of Marxist dogma (still in vogue in the 50’s) was dismissed as essentially an abstract ideology lacking in that element of personal involvement which he saw as the heart of any philosophy deserving of the name.

This emphasis on the uniqueness of any attempt to understand the human condition has notoriously led to Marcel’s being labelled an “existentialist.” It was a label which he had come to dislike and which he rejected again: Sartre and the existentialists, who were atheists, believed that philosophy led to the death of any objective truth or morality; Marcel managed to combine personal search with some kind of objective truth, while respecting individual choice and rejecting any system purporting to have all the answers. In his emphasis on and respect for the unique nature of individual experience, Marcel came to excoriate any –ism which led to dehumanizing human beings. His warning nowadays seems more prophetic than ever. In a world where globalization, unbridled capitalism and the despotism to which they lead, offer a greater threat than ever to ordinary human living, reducing people into mere functions for money-making, and “restricting the concept of man.” Such functionalism is inimical to the spiritual side of human beings. (Global warming of minds leads to global warming—and destruction—of nature, of the very earth on which we live.) He quoted from an essay which he had written over a quarter century earlier, which pointed out that,

Life in a world centred on function is liable to despair because in reality this world is empty.

Marcel’s argument led, inevitably, to a greater awareness of the relevance of religion. Philosophy is a kind of light and he quoted St. John on the

Light which enlightens every man who comes into this world

There should consequently be some kind of convergence between philosophy and religion. Philosophy is by no means incompatible with and may lead towards that belief which underlies religion, though he emphasized that each is distinct.

I came out from that lecture, my head buzzing with ideas, knowing that I had had the privilege of being in the presence of and hearing a real philosopher, someone who could be mentioned in the company of Plato; someone to whom one might pose an apparently insoluble problem, knowing that he would go deeper into it than anyone could. Knowing too that his ideas, his profundity would be a life-changing experience. And so they were.

Desmond Egan

Desmond Egan (born 1936) is one of Ireland’s leading poets. Author of over twenty collections of poetry, his work has been translated into more than ten languages, and has won numerous awards. Egan is also organizer of the Gerard Manley Hopkins Summer School, held annually in Newbridge, Co. Kildare, since 1987.

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2019 MARCEL SATELLITE SESSION RECAP

The 2019 Marcel satellite session at the American Catholic Philosophical Association's annual meeting (held in Minneapolis, November 2019) continued a long tradition of vibrant Marcel scholarship. It also injected a youthful vitality into the proceedings. The session brought Marcel into a dialogue with an intellectual giant from the past, while also looking at how his philosophy could help address the potential for a radically new form of life in the future. In both cases, Marcel's thoughts on immortality were at the forefront.

Zachary Willcutt (Boston College) pursued an ambitious project in bringing Marcel and Augustine together in order to provide an ontological foundation for eternal life. In his rigorous and insightful essay, Willcutt told the audience that "Marcel's love-based approach to immortality, as supported by Augustine's lack-based ontology, reveals a coherent synthesis, one that provides an ontological foundation for immortality" (Willcutt, "Augustine and Marcel on Immortality," 3). The surprising nature of the synthesis is grounded on the notion that a fullness of life in the present provides a Marcelian springboard to the beyond, whereas Augustine seems to arrive at an afterlife by way of an escape from the nothingness of present existence. According to Willcutt, Augustine's "restless heart" (Willcutt, 5)—a heart restless due to the self's inability to exist as sufficient unto itself—generates a mode of being where one is brought out of him or herself to the other and ultimately brought to the only other that can satisfy such a heart, namely, God. In and through the other and, again, the Divine other most particularly, the lacking self is brought to a fullness of being. Willcutt then went on to make the case that Marcel essentially operates with the same ontological presuppositions. The self, which constitutes a lack unto itself, comes to fruition and fulfillment through the other.

Paul Camacho (Villanova University) graciously chaired the session and also provided the most pressing as well as fruitful pushback to Willcutt's analysis. Camacho, who is himself an emergent Augustine scholar, questioned whether a trajectory that associates Augustine's coming to God and the afterlife through what Willcutt termed an "exteriorization" via love was commensurate with Augustine finding God through a movement of interiorization. Camacho is, of course, referring to Augustine's discovery of God as closer to his self than he is to himself. Such a question and the dialogue surrounding it certainly calls for a continuation in future Marcel sessions and other scholarly venues.

Geoffrey Karabin (Neumann University) also took up the theme of immortality. Marcel's love-based approach to the afterlife was brought into conversation with a future in which life beyond death would be achieved by technological means. Karabin's point was not to assert the reality or even likelihood of such a future, but to ask whether a technological form of the afterlife could serve as an adequate substitute for a traditional form of immortality. In his exploration of the question, Karabin established Marcel's love-based approach as functioning on a fundamentally different ground than that of a technological approach to the beyond. In the former, an embrace of and a fidelity to the fundamental worth of the beloved prompts hope for life beyond death. In

the latter, there is an emphasis on autonomy and overcoming the conditions provided to human beings by birth. The challenge Karabin posed to a technological beyond is whether something fundamental is lost when exchanging receptivity for autonomy? He asked whether something fundamental is lost when an afterlife is no longer anchored in the elemental goodness of being and is instead predicated upon human imagination and desire.

Two years after winning the ACPA's young scholar award for a paper concerning Marcel and epistemology, Joseph Gamache (Marian University) provided the Marcel Society another glimpse of his keen and insightful intellect. Gamache provided a formal commentary on Karabin's paper. After a concise and helpful summarization of Karabin's main themes, Gamache structured his response around four questions. 1) Should one distinguish belief from hope and conclude that, whereas belief is dependent upon the objective truth or falsity of the belief, hope is exempt from this epistemic paradigm? 2) Given that the irreplaceability of the beloved serves as a source of belief in the afterlife, how ought we to understand that irreplaceability? Is it reducible to the unique set of qualities and characteristics associated with the beloved or is there an additional element, namely, the way a person inhabits these his/her qualities and characteristics? Gamache provided additional flesh to the question by referencing the possibility of cloning. 3) In his third query, Gamache asked whether the love that gives rise to a hope for life beyond death requires any moral preconditions in order to generate such a hope? Are morally sound relationships alone able to grant the lover access to a beyond and, if not, is this problematic? 4) Gamache closed his commentary by way of asking all participants to think from the perspective of students and/or all those whose lives are increasingly interlaced with technology. Incarnate love with embodied others can be messy, ambiguous, and plagued by uncertainty, whereas many in the contemporary generation increasingly find comfort and security in the domain of the technological. How, Gamache asks, can Marcel or scholars engaged with Marcel speak to those who find a technological life more attractive than a life based upon concrete relations with others?

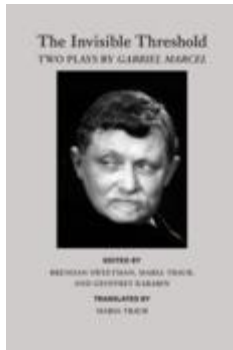
Whether in reference to the past or the future, what one might say in summarizing this session is that those who find Marcel's work important would be buoyed by an afternoon in which a younger generation of scholars took Marcel's work to heart and made his profundity present.

(Dr. Geoffrey Karabin, Neumann University)

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NEW BOOK ON MARCEL

Just out from St Augustine's Press!



978-1-58731-389-9

Paper \$19

The Invisible Threshold: Two Plays by Gabriel Marcel

Edited by Brendan Sweetman, Maria Traub, and Geoffrey Karabin; Translated by Maria Traub, 275 pages, 6" x 9", preface, notes, bibliographical

French philosopher and dramatist, Gabriel Marcel (1888-1973), who belonged to the movement of French existentialism, is one of the most insightful thinkers of the twentieth century. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Marcel approaches human existence from a theistic perspective, and gives priority to the themes of hope, fidelity and faith in the human search for meaning in a challenging world. Written early in his career, the plays in this new volume were originally published in 1913 under the title *Le Seuil invisible* (*The Invisible Threshold*).

The first play, *Grace*, explores the theme of religious conversion. The drama depicts a crisis between characters of genuine depth and sincerity, who are struggling with different interpretations of shared experiences. After a serious illness, Gerard, one of the main protagonists, undergoes a religious conversion, an experience which allows of two different and irreconcilable interpretations. The play raises the question of grace in a profound dramatization of a personal religious experience as it sustains in challenging life situations.

Similar themes are addressed but developed differently in *The Sandcastle*. This drama explores the confrontation between one's beliefs and their consequences when faced with challenging family and social circumstances, especially with regard to the tension between love and freedom that often arises between parents and children. Marcel raises issues of moral character, commitment and sincerity, and introduces the role doubt plays in the way we form and hold our convictions. The springboard for the unfolding of the drama is the contrast between accepting Christianity in an intellectual and cultural sense, and a Christianity that is lived. Both plays bring out one of Marcel's major themes: that life's most profound, fulfilling experiences are often compromised in what he describes as the modern, broken world (*le monde cassé*), a world unfortunately characterized by alienation, loss of meaning and feelings of despair.

These new plays of Marcel's, here translated into English for the first time, will appeal to all interested in the role of grace in everyday life, the relationship between faith and reason, the choice of faith in a secular world, and the struggle between inauthentic and authentic existence. Marcel raises weighty and challenging questions, but does not offer final answers. In his dramatic work, he leaves those to us.