

The Undeniable Import of Marcel's Hope

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Abstract: The contemporary man's inclination to transcendence and the ontological is threatened to collapse due to technology, bureaucracy, and the "problematical." With the pervasiveness of both public and private organizations' processes focusing on profit and selfish motives, discounting human and spiritual formation, man's descent to desolation is certain. Hence, "alienation" from himself and the loss of all the wonder, thrill, curiosity, and enthusiasm for all values of life is conceivable. Gabriel Marcel, who experienced the devastation and desolation of the two world wars and, the many excruciating events, such as death and suffering with his family, describes his situation as a "broken world." But because of the profound love and hope that he and his family shared with one another, he was able to keep going in his life. These experiences made him triumphantly confront the relations among death, love, and hope in his life. Accordingly, with man's situation today that are closing his inclination towards transcendence and the ontological, this paper aims to ascertain the import of Marcel's hope. From several Marcellian themes, which are preliminary and interrelated in the discourse of hope, to hope itself, this paper further poses the proposition that hope is undeniable in man's life addressing the many sways for desolation.

Keywords: *Marcel, hope, technology, bureaucracy, problematical, man*

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Introduction

The situation where man lives is characterized as the “broken world”¹ by Gabriel Marcel. The “ontological exigence,” being suppressed by monism and relativism, ignores the individual and the transcendent. Everyone and everything are identified according to the function they do, and all matters pertaining to existence are dealt with techniques.² Technology and man’s direct dependence on it, and the propensity to deliberate technically as the superior basis to validate truth, are becoming more regular. It is alarming because evidently existential problems cannot be resolved with technique. When man comes to realize the incapability of techniques to address existential questions, he is left with no other options. Indeed, technology has its appropriate utility; however its deification delivers man to despair. It is exactly this misuse of technology and characterization of man as function that is rampant in today’s “broken world.”

Unaware, man’s situation is continuously bureaucratized. He is deeply wounded by institutions and systems that day by day seem to become more impersonal and depersonalizing. In effect, the confidence that everything can be explained exhaustively and the thought that his relationship with others is personal, overshadow him. He allows no room for the conviction that there is something more or something else. He analytically abstracts matters that pertain the self. Accordingly, since bureaucracy is shallow and external in approach, he is “alienated” from his true self. He has no grasp of himself. At some point, he identifies himself on his possessions. The fact that his own death will take everything from him brings despair. Moreover, the most depersonalizing consequence is losing the significance of the other’s existence on his, believing that by himself, he is sufficient. He inadequately encounters the “I” and objectively encounters the “thou.” Hence, he ceases to encounter his own unique self and the other’s, as well.

All of these avenues for despair, for Marcel, are nonetheless avenues for hope. A world without the possibility of despair is a world without hope. In his words: “The truth is that, there can be, strictly speaking, no hope except when the temptation to despair exists. Hope is the act by which this temptation is actively or victoriously overcome.”³

Accordingly, with man’s various preoccupations and with his situation today that are closing his inclination towards transcendence and the ontological, this paper aims to ascertain the import of Marcel’s hope, thus, to address the temptations of

¹ Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, trans. Manya Harari, (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1995), 10-15.

² Cf. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator, Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* (New York: Harper, 1962), 29.

³ *Ibid.*, 36.

despair. With the several Marcellian themes that are necessary along the discourse of hope's undeniability in man's existence, and with the need to "recuperate" what has been "dissolved"⁴ in man's life, this paper contends to elaborate hope's guarantee for the modern man, i.e., by participation in and awareness of being and Infinite Being, through which he can fully exist.

New Standards of Living

A. Technological

Technology clearly explains and harnesses phenomena for man's advantage. Typically, engineers are the reason along all its progress. History shows that mankind has gone from simple computers that were really huge and enormously expensive, to just within everyone's means today, which can now process several applications and mathematical operations. Technology facilitates man's life by making his survival easier and better. It makes him accurately understand the wonders and marvels of things around him. Somehow, dreams are now realities because of technology. People consider it to be the reason behind everything that man knows—from electronics and gadgets, medicines, transportation, building, to even food. Much more than these, it unceasingly shapes the now small-world by bridging everyone and everything. Indeed, life without technology is unthinkable. Hence, it is inevitable that technology and all its values have penetrated man's core.⁵ This immersion in technology displaces his ideals in life; discourages him to be genuine; and impedes his openness to his natural vocation and orientation towards transcendence.

Although technology has improved civilization in many ways, such as the global economy, most of its processes also create by-products that are detrimental to man and his environment. This is clear along communication technology that rapidly alters man's culture where barriers to interactions are minimized, generating new subcultures.⁶ Furthermore, technology results in a loss of interiority in man, making him alienated from himself because it weakens his capacity for introspection; thus, he is no longer capable of reaching the core of his being, with openness to others in communion, and total surrender towards the transcendent.⁷ In effect, with man's insincerity towards himself and his inability to communicate with his true self, and with the lack of fidelity to participate in a communion with others, he is discouraged in his hope for unity with the existential transcendence.⁸

⁴ See Marcel, *Being and Having*, 103.

⁵ See Emmanuel G. Mesthene, "The Role of Technology in Society," in *Technology and Man's Future*, ed. Albert H. Teich, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 156-180.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 156-180.

⁷ Cf. Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, 55-56.

⁸ Cf. Gendreau, "The Role of Technology in Society," 156-180.

Thus, given that it profoundly influences the values of the world, some philosophical discourses have been inscribed and a moral question of whether such aid of technology to man really develops his culture constructively or not, are posed. Man should be aware that technology does not address his vital needs and hopes in life, where it only leaves him in a forlorn situation, and where basic questions in life cannot be adequately answered. He must re-evaluate and enhance himself with enlightenment that emanates from second reflection and ontology of being.⁹ Marcel is aware that technology is unable to address these ontological values. He points out that man must be vigilant of whatever that which disgraces the self in his hope for the flourishing of communion with others and the fortification in transcendence.¹⁰

Marcel is one of those philosophers who ruminate upon the blessings and disasters of technology.¹¹ He devoted his time in bringing back man's integrity and dignity not just for himself but for the "other" and the spiritual.¹² His message is metaphysical in perspective and the approach, cautionary. The warning is on the condition that technology can bring to man, i.e., contrary to his enhancement and aspiration to fulfillment in life. What is important for Marcel is man's openness towards transcendence, his natural vocation in life. Marcel writes: "the issue is metaphysical requiring a commitment to the whole of the person as an embodied spirit functioning in and through its material external condition and its internal spiritual exigency."¹³

While it is a fact that technology facilitates mankind along its struggles at surviving with life and the world, it is also a fact that technology has damaging effects as it unrelentingly and inevitably encroaches man's situation and future. Although it alleviates various forms of sufferings, techniques often appear to be problematic and defective, thus deliver man to desolation, and displace his hopes.¹⁴ This is why the potential adverse effects of technology on man's future are still of critical interest. What concerns Marcel is the displacement of man's ontological values or the loss of feeling for the mystery of being; this for him is man's foundation for self-fulfillment. Thus, Marcel vows to carry this task to be on the alert for a hopeful pledge of man's predicaments.¹⁵

⁹ Cf. Gabriel Marcel, *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans. Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973), 247.

¹⁰ Cf. Gendreau, "The Role of Technology in Society," 156-180.

¹¹ Cf. Bernard A. Gendreau, "The Cautionary Ontological Approach to Technology of Gabriel Marcel." (paper presented at the 20th World Congress of Philosophy, Boston, USA, August 10-15, 1998).

¹² Cf. *Ibid.*

¹³ Gabriel Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, trans. George S. Fraser (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1962), 37.

¹⁴ Cf. Gendreau, "The Role of Technology in Society," 156-180.

¹⁵ Marcel's negative comments are not to discard and/or destroy technology. He always prompts his readers of its constructive contributions. It is clear also that technology has served mankind well

B. Bureaucratic

In the advancement of technology, society relies heavily on bureaucratic organization to achieve its ends. As human relationships and the demands upon government within a society become more complex and its technological expertise advances, its bureaucratic organizations tend to expand in size and type. As a result, the institutions, be they governments, business enterprises, labor unions, interest groups, churches, political parties, or universities, all tend toward bureaucratic structure. Bureaucracy is designed to achieve technical efficiency, which is widely regarded as its chief merit. Evidently, it specializes on functions, wherein its hierarchical chain of command is impersonal, and its treatment of employees is a means to the realization of organizational ends.¹⁶

Accordingly, the problem which man is in prevents him from experiencing self-realization. His situation indicates that there is very little chance for it because the bureaucratic system carries various contemptuous characteristics that sacrifice the climate of creativity, spontaneity, and reflection essential to human self-realization.¹⁷ Marcel is fearful that within bureaucracy, man is constantly in danger of losing his authenticity by distinguishing his self from work activities. The following passage reflects his essentially negative attitude toward bureaucracy:

It is all too clear that the state of universal continuous registration and enrolment, from birth to death can only be brought into being in the bosom of an anonymous bureaucracy; now, such a bureaucracy cannot hope to inspire any other sentiment than a vague fear - the same feeling that takes possession of me personally every time I have to deal in a government office with some impersonal official who identifies himself with his job.¹⁸

Marcel is concerned that such discipline becomes so internalized that inner spontaneity becomes impossible. The significant things that matter to this kind of officials, as far as their loyalty to their department heads goes, are the stimulations of promotion or bonus. But their close personal tie of loyalty is not transcendent, i.e., a subject-object rather than an intersubjective relationship. Moreover, because of a derangement of priorities whereby technique rather than character is valued today, role-playing tends to spread. Thus, bureaucracy can also destroy intersubjectivity for

by making it more pleasant, humane, and safe. He is warning his readers only of its destructive effects along its progress because of its dehumanizing and depersonalizing on man's life.

¹⁶ See Michael P. Smith, "Self-fulfillment in a Bureaucratic Society: A Commentary on the Thought of Gabriel Marcel," *American Society for Public Administration*, (1969), 25-32.

¹⁷ Cf. Smith, "Self-fulfillment in a Bureaucratic Society: A Commentary on the Thought of Gabriel Marcel," 25-32.

¹⁸ Cf. Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, trans. George S. Fraser, (London: The Harvil Press, 1951), 38.

those who become fascinated by output and who become corrupted by the desire to exercise power over the determination of production goals.

Marcel cautions man against the proliferation of four major bureaucratic modes of behavior into the realm of creativity, namely: pantechnicism, routinization, loss of self-identity, and form-filling.¹⁹ What Marcel terms “pantechnicism,” is an abuse of the methods of science, an extension of its techniques into the areas where they are inapplicable, such as interpersonal relations, philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. This encourages one to carry over into the domain of essence and being, a notion which really belongs to the empirical and economic cycle of production, distribution, and consumption; hence, treating man as means rather than ends. Routinization is the second bureaucratic mode of behavior whose application Marcel seeks to limit. He asks if the life of a subway conductor or a ticket puncher is not a mere “timetable,” a routinized checklist allocating so many hours to each function.²⁰ Thirdly, the loss of self-identity is the misplacement of pride in “craft.” Techniques are specialized, perfectible, and transmissible by theoretical instruction. But this specialization is not the same as the craftsmanship of the artisan. In today’s world of rational efficiency and economies of scale, Marcel foresees the extinction of the beauty of genuine craftsmanship. Finally, Marcel is concerned the form-filling approach that clouds the true self-identity of the subject by a screen of bureaucratic forms, which encourages the reduction of humanity to a few output data.²¹

Marcel’s overall evaluation of the bureaucratic life seems to be working profoundly against the “I-thou” relationship. As bureaucratic modes of behavior spread into the world at large, all genuine human relationships are threatened. “Thous” become objects to be manipulated; they become “its.” By stifling creative and spontaneous behavior, bureaucracy works against creative fidelity.²²

Hence, the process where man discovers his real self is through communion with the others—a participation in being that is regularly enriched by fidelity, fulfilled by love, and sustained by hope. It is a personal encounter of the one person with another, of an “I” to a “thou.” It transcends the opposition between “self” and “other” by placing two persons in genuine intimacy. Each is unable to treat the other as an object placed in front of him. Their essential human dignity rests in the genuineness and openness of their relationship with each other. This makes them authentic.

¹⁹ Cf. Smith, “Self-fulfillment in a Bureaucratic Society: A Commentary on the Thought of Gabriel Marcel,” 25-32.

²⁰ Cf. Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 11.

²¹ Cf. Smith, “Self-fulfillment in a Bureaucratic Society: A Commentary on the Thought of Gabriel Marcel,” 25-32.

²² According to Michael P. Smith, specialization, routine, and impersonality increase with the size of organizations.

C. Problematical

The perplexity of man in his search for truth is due to his inclination in “problem” over “mystery” in his life. He bars the way of the mystery, does not participate in communion with others, which thus, partially alienates one self. He faces mystery impersonally and in a detached manner, relying solely upon his own resources and not recognizing others, in the spirit of togetherness. He reduces various essentials of life such as hope to desire, human life and existence to a series of problems which are, then, capable of being solved or resolved by applying the proper techniques, theories, social and psychological programs, or medical treatments and reason to analysis.

Apparently, these are widespread among individuals today. The preoccupation towards things that are detrimental on one's self-realization gobbles them up. Abstracting the mystery and avoiding experience proper to a human being is a daily affair.

There can only be a problem for me where I have to deal with facts which are, or which I can at least cause to be, exterior to myself; facts presenting themselves to me in a certain disorder for which I struggle to substitute an orderliness capable of satisfying the requirements of my thought. When this substitution has been effected the problem is solved. As for me, who devote myself to this operation, I am outside... the facts with which it deals with. But when it involves realities closely bound up with my existence, realities which unquestionably influence my existence... I cannot consciously proceed in this way. That is to say, I cannot make an abstraction of myself, or, if you like, to bring about this division between myself on the one hand and some ever present given principle of my life on the other; I am effectively and vitally involved in these realities.²³

Such realities are mysteries, not problems, because they envelop humanity. Likewise, according to Marcel, “I cannot place myself outside it or before it; I am engaged in this encounter, I depend upon it, I am inside it in a certain sense, it envelops me and it comprehends me even if it is not comprehended by me.”²⁴ He further describes the difference:

A problem is something met with which bars my passage. It is before me in its entirety. A mystery... is something in which I find myself caught up, and whose essence is therefore not to be before me in its entirety. It is as though in this province the distinction between in me and before me loses its meaning.²⁵

²³ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 68-9.

²⁴ Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 22.

²⁵ Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans., Katherine Farrer, (Westminster, UK: Dacre Press,

A problem is something which can be set apart, treated objectively, analyzed, debated on, evaluated, and, if adequate information is available, correctly examined and solved. A mystery, on the other hand, cannot be set apart, treated objectively, or solved. One of the best ways to clarify this difference is to use an example: the death of a loved one. The death of a loved one is not a problem for the survivor, but a mystery. There is no miraculous verse of scripture, no magical psychological theory or technique, nor medical prescription, which solves the loneliness and sense of loss because the survivor is involved in this death, the mystery. The mystery is lived, not solved. There is no way that anyone can bring about the separation between the self and this death that need to treat the death objectively, for the deceased is an intimate part of the one who still lives. Mysteries encounter and involve us, i.e., we struggle with them, but we do not solve them.²⁶

Desolation of this kind is evident because all mysteries are reduced to problems. Hope, on the other hand, is the active attitude that involves openness to mystery, difficult as this openness may be. Any man engrossed with the power of a problem is no more than a collection of definable functions, and his life is only a series of problems, and he searches for techniques to solve problems.

Another reality that makes man's life problematic is his inclination to "primary reflection" over "secondary reflection." He tends to reduce the whole of reality and the unity of his concrete experience to the categories and methods of abstract analysis. He makes his existential participation in being impossible and reduces all mysteries of human existence to a series of problems; others to objects, and the world of being to a world of having.²⁷ Marcel writes about reflection occurring at "various levels:"

...reflection itself can manifest itself at various levels; there is primary reflection, and there is also what I shall call secondary reflection; this secondary reflection has, in fact, been very often at work during these early lectures, and I dare to hope that as our task proceeds it will appear more and more clearly as the special high instrument of philosophical research. Roughly, we can say that where primary reflection tends to dissolve the unity of experience, which is put before it (i.e., it is essentially analysis), the function of secondary reflection is essentially recuperative; it re-conquers that unity.²⁸

1949), 100. Marcel often uses the phrases "before me" and "in me" to further explicate the difference between problem and mystery.

²⁶ Cf. Albert B. Randall, *The Mystery of Hope in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel 1888 - 1973 Hope and Homo Viator* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 133-134.

²⁷ Marcel examines the distinction between primary and secondary reflection in his several works. His most systematic effort is part of the Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen, which are published under the title *The Mystery of Being*. In these published lectures, Marcel devotes an entire chapter on the characteristics and limitations, as well as, the differences between primary and secondary reflection.

²⁸ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 102-03.

Marcel argues that only the person who is genuinely accessible to others can experience the “mystery of being.” “Primary reflection” is in the realm of objective knowledge. Here, the subject-object dichotomy develops because one abstracts and categorizes others, places, and things. He objectifies by solving problems through some devised techniques to realize desired ends. In effect, according to Marcel, such abstract analysis dissolves the unity of concrete experience and that makes existential participation with others impossible. Hence, “secondary reflection” is necessary to recreate that unity. Marcel’s secondary reflection carries man beyond the problematic to the transcendental realm of mystery. “A mystery, unlike a soluble problem, is something in which is intimately involved.”²⁹

Marcel believes that the fullness of reality and of human experience, i.e., the mystery of being, can only be penetrated by secondary reflection, and that through secondary reflection the self is unified in such a way that freedom, faith, love, and hope become possible.³⁰

Moreover, another reality where man’s authenticity is in peril is his obsession to “having” over “being.” It is a fear of the loss of things one has because he is possessed and enslaved by them. Thus, he worries that his own death will take everything from him.

One cannot relate to oneself and the world either as possessor and possessed or in an existential relation of availability. I would like to make it a point here, that the relation of having is not so much characterized by material possessions, as by a certain self-obsession. Cut off from the other and the ontological security, which the other can bestow by the act of recognition, the subject seeks to give to herself ontological weight by accumulating possessions, and by attempting to identify with these. But this possessive relation is a dialectical one in which the subject becomes the victim of her possessions.³¹

Man sees himself from the things he possesses. And, in contrast to having, being is characterized as a state of openness which Marcel calls *disponibilité* (availability or disposability) with others. *Disponibilité* is “an aptitude to give oneself to anything which offers and to bind oneself by the gift.”³² However, a man, who is unavailable (*indisponibilité*) with the others, closes one self to their concrete presence. He would see them as animated objects. Thus, he is incapable of seeing his true self as a “thou” because he treats them as purely external to him. In effect, the feeling of alienation and desolation is certain.

²⁹ Ibid., 117.

³⁰ This is Marcel’s invitation and warning to everyone: a warning against the “reductive imperialism” of primary reflection and an invitation to restore “the ontological weight of human experience” through another kind of reflection that involves recollection, unity, and insight.

³¹ Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, trans. Bernard Wall, (London: Rockcliff, 1952), 163.

³² Marcel, *Being and Having*, 23.

Disponibilité and *indisponibilité* are indicators where man relates to others, intersubjectively. *Disponibilité* is the readiness to lend one's resources for the sake of the others at their disposal. "It will perhaps be made clearer if I say the person who is at my disposal is the one who is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need; while the one who is not at my disposal seems merely to offer me a temporary loan raised on his resources. For the one I am a presence; for the other I am an object."³³ In *disponibilité*, man concedes to his inability and futility when away from the others. He recognizes his interdependence with the other through a concrete presence and communion, while being conscious of maintaining his own individuality. "It should be obvious at once that a being of this sort is not an autonomous whole, is not in expressive English phrase, self-contained; on the contrary such a being is open and exposed, as unlike as can be to a compact impenetrable mass."³⁴ It is an act of waiting, not demanding, on the part of the other. Accordingly, Marcel writes: "a being awaiting a gift or favor from another being but only on the grounds of his liberality, and that he is the first to protest that the favor he is asking is a grace, that is to say the exact opposite of an obligation."³⁵

The ascendancy of man to *indisponibilité* over *disponibilité* makes him incompetent to see the relevance of the other's existence with his because he believes that by his own, he is sufficient. Because of his inadequacy to encounter the "I" and his impersonal encounter with the "thou," he ceases to encounter his own unique self and the other's, as well; in effect, he is walking along the path of alienation and desolation.

Hope

From childhood up to midlife, Marcel was confronted with many obstacles related to death and suffering—both with his family and his countrymen. He struggled on the death of his mother when he was about four years old and, later in his life, on the prolonged suffering and death of his wife. His poor health and his father's academic expectations for academic excellence burdened him. There were also his works with the Red Cross during World War I and the many personal and national events of World War II. But because of the profound love and hope that he and his family shared with another, he was able to keep going in his life. Such experiences made him confront and explore the relations among death, love, and hope in his life. As a young boy and a young man, he brought together his father's attitude and his mother's moral sensitivities and longing for the absolute. He labored and expounded on his need for the presence of the other and the need to converse with them, in

³³ Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 40.

³⁴ Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 145.

³⁵ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 55.

the spirit of communion and togetherness. Moreover, his love and passion for the theater and music were also his consolation during those desolate climates of his life. Certainly, Marcel lived a hope-centered-life that made him survive all those depressing experiences.³⁶ Accordingly, due to these several excruciating events in his life, hope is central both in his life and philosophy. In his words: "If there is a concept in my work dominating all others, it is without doubt that of hope...."³⁷

Gabriel Marcel began his discourse about hope by posing the concept of "incarnation" as its foundation. Incarnation is at the foreground of his philosophy as both the definite given of human existence and the beginning for a concrete philosophy. Whereby man is rooted in the world, and is capable of participation in being and Infinite Being. He becomes a temporal being that exposes him in time and that consequently towards the inevitability of death. Marcel shows that the ultimate truth of existence is incarnation and that human existence is not disembodied, but closely united with an actual, flesh and blood body.³⁸ We are definable because we are incarnated. Accordingly, for Marcel, understanding this fact is the "central datum of all metaphysics"³⁹ and any philosophical investigation along human understanding must commence in cognizance of incarnation. "Incarnation—the central given of metaphysics. Incarnation is the situation of a being who appears to himself to be, as it were bound to a body. I can neither say that it is I, nor that it is not I, not that it is transcended from the start."⁴⁰

Incarnation is a necessary condition for hope, however, by itself alone, it is insufficient for man's fulfillment in hope. Accordingly, it is why communion that ascertains hope due its availability for the other; and, transcendence that fulfills and anchors hope with the infinite Being, are necessary.

Because hope is a mystery and not a problem, no adequate definitions are possible. As a mystery, hope is ineffable, i.e., hope cannot be adequately defined, described, or explained. Instead, hope is lived. However, there is a crucial passage that

³⁶ Gabriel Marcel, "An Autobiographical Essay," *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. The Library of Living Philosophers*, vol. 17 (La Salle: Open Court, 1984).

³⁷ Gabriel Marcel, *Philosophical Fragments 1909-1914 and the Philosopher of Peace*, intro., Lionel A. Blain, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), 19. A passage from Marcel's response, which he delivered, after he received the award *Peace Prize of the Borsenverein des Deutschen Buchandels*, at Frankfurt, on September 20, 1964. Also, in a conversation between him and Paul Ricoeur in his book: *Tragic Wisdom and Beyond*, trans., Stephen Jolin and Peter McCormick, (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1973), 255-56, the latter mentioned "hope gives his research a tempo, a groping and yet confident rhythm," and that "hope makes the passage of life something more than just simple wandering." Certainly, hope has a profound import both in his philosophy and life.

³⁸ Thomas J. M. Van Ewijk, *Gabriel Marcel, An Introduction*. (New York: Deus Books Paulist Press, 1965), 31-40.

³⁹ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 12.

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

almost defines hope: “Hope is essentially the availability of a soul which has entered intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge the transcendent act – the act establishing the vital regeneration of which experience affords both the pledge and the first-fruits.”⁴¹ It means that one does not think of hope; rather, one lives in hope. Such definition shows hope as an activity of the human will that becomes possible first at the level of communion and then, with the help of love, accomplishes the experience of transcendence. As one lives in hope, he lives in being and Infinite Being. Thus, the value and depth of human existence are determined, in part, by hope since hope is a way of participating in being and Infinite Being, and such participation is experiencing the fullness of life.

Explicitly, Marcel shows hope as an entrance into being and Infinite Being; it is through communion that man participates in, enters into, and is open to being and Infinite Being. Through hope, the resources of being and Infinite Being become available to the person who hopes, and as a result, becomes himself available to the relationships at the levels of both communion and transcendence. And, the person who lives in hope begins again, is no longer captive to the categories of the past and their inductive, predictable consequences.⁴² Similarly, Marcel goes to show that hope is also a response to the call of being and Infinite Being as heard by man in his lived experience.⁴³

Thus, for Marcel, hope is both an entrance and response to being and Infinite Being. To enter into being, to become available to being, and to begin again in being is to experience the fullness and the richness of life and the depth of reality. Accordingly, Marcel stresses participation in being, i.e., to exist is to co-exist. Existence is attributed only to others, and in virtue of their otherness. In such relation with others, man enhances his self. Marcel speaks also about hope being fortified in transcendence. He points out that such feeling is a need for transcendence, which is associated to a certain dissatisfaction or an interior urge or an appeal to go beyond human relationships or “I-thou” relationship, i.e., the ontological position of hope in relation to transcendence. Hope in the level of transcendence participates in the Infinite Being.

Conclusion

Man, in his concrete day-to-day lived experiences, in his existential situation, is confronted by and confronts realities such as illness, separation, loneliness, alienation, and anguish, which are brought about by his damaging standards of living and various preoccupations in life that do not give weight to what are essential. These encounters profoundly lure him to either deny or hope beings, i.e., either to despair

⁴¹ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 10.

⁴² Cf. A. Randall, *The Mystery of Hope in the Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel 1888 - 1973, Hope and Homo Viator*, 341-345.

⁴³ Cf. *loc. cit.*

or to affirm being. The emphasis on “having,” “problem,” “primary reflection,” and “*Indisponibilit *,” the technological dehumanization of modern society, and the sway of the bureaucratic system of the world contribute to a dual kind of alienation; the subject feels a stranger to himself and a stranger in his world. “Alienation, I mean, the fact that man seems to have become more and more a stranger to himself, to his own essence, to the point of calling this essence into question, of refusing it ... as one has seen in the extreme expressions of contemporary existentialism.”⁴⁴

These are avenues along today’s experiences of man that the danger of despair is overpowering. By relying solely on the problematic that reduces mysteries to problems, problems for which solutions can be proposed and tested, hope cannot emerge. Marcel writes: “The capacity to hope diminishes in proportion as the soul becomes increasingly chained to its experience and to the categories, which arise from it ... to the world of the problematical.”⁴⁵ Furthermore, he writes: “... a world where techniques are paramount is a world given over to desire and fear.... It is perhaps characteristic of Hope to be unable either to make direct use of any technique or to call it to her aid.”⁴⁶

However, according to Marcel, even if the victory over despair is not a certainty, it is also when these avenues to despair turn great that the greatest hope can emerge. In fact, for Marcel, it is despair itself which offers man the very possibility of hope: “The truth is that there can, strictly speaking, be no hope except when the temptation is actively or victoriously overcome.”⁴⁷

While many causes of despair can emerge inevitably along man’s life the most devastating is the loss of the feeling and experience of ‘togetherness’ which also seems more and more to be losing its meaning. “The very idea of a close human relationship is becoming increasingly hard to put into practice, and is even being disparaged.”⁴⁸ Marcel further says: “The more we estrange ourselves from our neighbor, the more we are lost in a night in which we can no longer even distinguish being from non-being.”⁴⁹ This is one of the clearest symptoms of the brokenness of the world that rapidly declines. We must remember that courtesy is one of the most important ways for which man can affirm the value of another. This is why rudeness is always a form of denying value to the other.

Marcel greatly elaborates hope, making it as an abiding weapon for the modern man. The participation in and awareness of being and Infinite Being are ways, through which man can fully exist. Responsive to the call of being and Infinite

⁴⁴ Gabriel Marcel, *Problematic Man* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 18.

⁴⁵ Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existentialism*, 43.

⁴⁶ Marcel, *Being and Having*, 76.

⁴⁷ Marcel, *Homo Viator*, 36.

⁴⁸ Marcel, *The Mystery of Being*, 34.

⁴⁹ Marcel, *Man Against Mass Society*, 264-65.

Being, a continual new beginning, freed of the determinism of the past and sway of modernity, is inevitable. Thus, hope is undeniably important in man's existence.^{PS}

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