Order Number 9406689

Creative fidelity: The study of compassionate consciousness in a technological world

Ford, Chris, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1993

U·M·I
300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

CREATIVE FIDELITY: THE STUDY OF COMPASSIONATE CONSCIOUSNESS IN A TECHNOLOGICAL WORLD

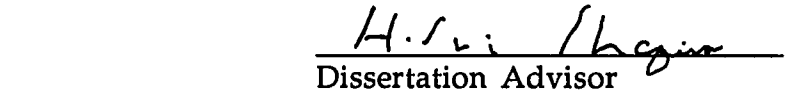
by

Chris Ford

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
1993

Approved by



Dissertation Advisor

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor ____________________

Committee Members ____________________

____

____

6/9/93

Date of Acceptance by Committee

6/9/93

Date of Final Oral Examination

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

FORD, CHRIS, Ph.D. Creative Fidelity: The Study of Compassionate Consciousness in a Technological World. (1993) Directed by Dr. Fritz Mengert. 195 pp.

In the tradition of western philosophy often focused on in the perennial search for wisdom is the foundations of philosophy that have based ontology and epistemology on abstract systems of thought. In these systems, thought is considered in and of itself, not in terms of its interrelationship to feelings and actions. These traditions of philosophy, founded on abstraction rather than on the concreteness of human experiencing, rarely touch the meaning of the questions, dilemmas, joys of being human. A void ensues in our understanding which both shapes and continuously reinforces existence thought of as thinking separated from feeling, mind separated from body and soul, and knowledge separated from being.

Throughout western philosophy, there have been thinkers who have resisted this thought that systematically divides and abstracts that about human experiencing which is interrelated and concrete. These phenomenological existential thinkers have sought and seek language that describes consciousness as the embodiment of mind, body, and soul and thus as the interplay between each of these dimensions. In this concept of embodied consciousness, thoughts are inextricably related to feelings, and thoughts and feelings to actions. In this sense, intellectual and ethical concerns are grounded in questions of meanings that are aesthetic and

spiritual.

This dissertation is an exploration of Gabriel Marcel's work, particularly his work about living in creative fidelity in terms of what it contributes to the phenomenological existential perspective of human meaning. The first chapter discusses the philosophical background of Marcel's work and how he extends the meanings of his philosophical education to seek to bridge the existential and spiritual dimensions of human experience. The second chapter explores the concrete texture of what it means to live in just relationships of creative fidelity. The third chapter examines different anthropological and cultural perspectives on why the human propensity to avoid meeting one another in relationships of meaning and existential truth. The fourth chapter explores the hope of finding compassion in a world of abstract technology, describing a language and concept of love that indicates creative fidelity.

CHAPTER I

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCRETENESS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER I

AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONCRETENESS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

A Personal Introduction to Creative Fidelity

Reflecting on why I have chosen in particular to write about the works of Gabriel Marcel, primarily on his concept of creative fidelity, I piece together moments, thoughts, and feelings that have brought me to graduate study in general. I was searching for people willing and able to help me address an "unthought known" that I held. This unthought known was a feeling that something was very wrong in my world and that these wrongs were not being addressed by me or anyone else.

I met this feeling of "wrong-ness" in workplaces I was exposed to, through religion that seemed institutionalized beyond meaning, in troubled relationships between lovers, friends, family members, and in the tremendous social problems involving sickness, poverty, abandoned children, and domestic violence. I think even more poignant for me than the magnitude of these problems was the almost desperate need I felt for other human beings whom I could trust to affirm in my presence that "yes, something is very wrong" and who subsequently had the experience, knowledge, and wisdom to help me language the predominant problems and questions. Courage was a quality absented more than not in so many of the

lives I knew. I wanted to meet human beings in whom there was courage to admit, address, and live out questions relevant to human experiencing.

To meet human beings who had not given up on participating in life in the justice-seeking or aesthetic or spiritual sense of participating was important to me. So many seemingly had given up their individual encounter with life to money, alcohol, drugs, or to escapist transcendental mantras such as "life is beautiful, really."

Though I had not languaged it as such, I understood that meaning is constructed not solitarily but in communion with one another. I needed intellectual, spiritual companionship that was real, real meaning that the intent of these relationships would be to inquire into what was actually happening in the realms of our social, cultural, personal experience and out of shared insights to weave meaningful experiencing into our concrete lives.

What was becoming apparent to me is that the actual dilemmas, challenges, and conflicts of human life are often unaddressed because we have allied our consciousness with the appearance side of the appearance/ reality dichotomy. We pretend that what appears to be <u>is</u> what is happening in human lives when in actuality something very different is going on. For example, we teach our children that America is a rich and generous nation, and yet we hide the actuality that many children are allowed to starve. Or children are told that a parent is asleep (actually is passed out) on the chair at 8:00 pm because she is tired when in fact she is drunk.

To consider the source of our affiliation with the appearance side of the dichotomy as epistemological, that we are limited to knowing only what appears to be because there is a limit to that which we can actually know, is to elevate this dichotomy to the realm of philosophy and to elevate it beyond the meanings that I am wishing to illuminate. Though there are important philosophical questions to raise about appearance and reality, as Kant did in his Critique of Pure Reason, the dichotomy I am struggling with here is not a result of philosophical tenets but rather seems to have evolved out of a need and desire to avoid embodied feeling life. This dichotomy stems less from the purity of philosophical concerns and more from a psycho-social affliction having to do with our tremendous fear of meeting our own feelings and those of one another. We must overcome this affliction, the fear of meeting human existence, before we can look to philosophical idealist explanations for the why of our limited knowledge of being. There is more that we can know than we admit to knowing. Or said another way, there are different experiences to experience than we allow.

Though I believed the appearance/reality problem needed initially to be approached in terms of psycho-social questions, my prior inquiries into psychological ways of thinking were unfulfilling. Too often I found psychological works geared towards simplistic explanations about the human psyche and human behavior rather than enriching explorations into the complexities and wonders of the human experience.

I became curious about philosophy. In the first place, it was philosophical questions (Who am I? What am I doing here?) that led humans to seek explanations about the human psyche. Throughout my philosophical studies my interest has tended towards existentialism and phenomenology. Idealism, as mentioned above, seemed to evade the dilemma of embodiment, viewing consciousness as a pure entity unaffected by the vicissitudes of human experiencing.

While the idealist explanations about consciousness were in no sense simplistic and were brilliantly worked out, the little that I could distill out of the works of Kant and Hegel, for example, led me to think about human experience in terms of abstract ideals rather than in terms of the concrete human struggle that includes body, mind, and soul. I became interested in phenomenological existentialists in that they were addressing the phenomenon of human life as it is experienced. Though Gabriel Marcel preferred to call himself a Neo-socratic rather than an existentialist, his work is enlightening both in the phenomenological and existential sense.

Gabriel Marcel was educated in idealism and yet he had experiences in his life that defied these pure explanations. In Marcel's first major work Metaphysical Journal (1927/1952a), he writes:

> Beyond this idealist theory, which though not denying existence brushes it away to an infinite distance, it is possible to construct a radical thesis which views existence as capable of being called into question and perhaps even as self-contradictory. . . . The ever-widening gulf between

> this (idealistic) mode of thinking and integral human experience with its life that trembles with tragedy, is enough to show up its inadequacy. (pp. 320, 322)

Marcel in his work is called to address the actuality of life experienced rather than to construct abstract ideas about life that sterilize humans against the acknowledgement of wrongs, problems, conflicts, and desires. Marcel is a philosopher who fought against the seduction of hiding from pain and confusion.

Opposition and conflict were essential to Marcel in order that important questions in relationship to one another be lived out. Marcel was usually receptive to the moment of facing an adversary, for what he trusted with others and within his own inner life of thought was challenge. Without challenge, there is a tendency, Marcel believed, to evade, distort, and deny the most relevant and humane dimensions of existence.

Marcel's friend of twenty years, E. M. Cioran, describes in a character sketch he wrote about Marcel, that to speak of courage in relation to Marcel, it would be most descriptive to use the word temerity. Marcel's way in his life and work is a way of audacity and a rash boldness toward the encountering of concrete human dilemmas (Cioran, 1971).

Marcel had a unique relationship to problems, according to Cioran, different from the tendencies in humans towards the denial of problems or the tendency of others to immerse themselves in problems for problems sake,

an immersion, which in itself, can become a kind of hiding place of negativity. In the former cases of those who deny, their withdrawal from problems is hidden in the pretense that "all is fine," the appearance that there are no problems. In the latter case of those immersed in problems, Cioran describes skeptics who present problem after problem only to deconstruct the problem until all that remains is a sense of the inane and meaningless nature of life.

Marcel has little in common with the former group, those who deny, since his thirst is for encountering concrete problems. What Marcel has in common with the skeptics is this thirst, a sense of "the sensual pleasure of the problem." How Marcel differs, however, from these skeptics is in the way he thought about and lived out problems. The deconstructive process of the skeptics begins and ends in nihilism. For Marcel, living out problems begins and ends with hope. Unlike the nihilists, for Marcel everything has a deep inner foundation. All experiencing is a contribution to inner life.

"Everyone has known times when he has been tempted to posit universal nonsense," Marcel wrote during the Second World War (cited in Cioran, 1971, p. 75). About Marcel:

> One might say that the basic meaning of his work and of his life was his refusal to succumb to this temptation, which is the most terrible of all temptations, since it is the product of our negative states, of our weak moments, and of all the gaps in our beings. Such temptations are also characterized by a certain sick quality that gives them a dangerous, irresistible charm. (Cioran, 1971, p. 75)

In this time when it is easily arguable that denial of human experiencing exists on a massive scale and that also present is a nihilistic postmodern mood, Marcel's temerity has become significant to me.

If we hide from the confusions of certain desires, from poverty, from desperate lives of loneliness, sickness, and hopelessness, then our lives will appear to be without these complexities and challenges and yet our lives <u>are</u> constituted by these dilemmas. When denied, our shared experiences become based not on what is happening but on what we make-believe is happening. In the psychological sense this often creates a condition of emotional schizophrenia, physically it creates wretched conditions that are ignored, and spiritually a community of amputated souls.

I grew up in an environment where my family and our friends often lived committed to appearance, to a pretense of what was happening. There was an implicit agreement to pretend that the horrors and difficulties were not. Life seemingly was a party - scotches, bourbons, cheese and crackers, music. Poverty a block from our house, alcoholism, deceit toward one another, inane educational experiences -- the party eliminated the worries.

I was never comfortable growing up in a world where human experience was not honestly and directly addressed, where fear was modeled rather than courage, where talk was too often shallow. I think I blended rather willingly in this world until the day my mother died. I was eighteen. My mother had had five malignant tumors removed, yet there were still

relatives trying to convince themselves that she had a bad cold. The morning that we rushed my mother to the hospital because she could not breathe, my grandmother referred to her illness as a bad case of pneumonia. It was not pneumonia. My mother had metastasized cancer in her lungs. She died that afternoon. The pretense ended. She was gone.

My mother is gone physically from my life -- no more of her voice, seeing of her eyes, feeling her touch. Her absence is hard for me emotionally. Intellectually it has been sobering, an experience of mortality, loss, the fragility of relationship, and the feelings of love that absence can amplify. Making meaning out of these complexities continues to be important to me. I have come to believe that meaning is not constructed out of attempts to avoid life but only through embracing life.

Through the death of my mother as through other experiences, human existence has come to have meanings both physical and spiritual. The physical dimension has to do with living in time, with ongoing experiences, and persistent and changing desires. The spiritual has to do with faith and with beliefs and values that persist, unchanged by the flux of experiencing. Though the physical and spiritual are explained here as if separately experienced, this separation is solely for the purpose of explicating the meanings. In concrete experiencing, the dialectic between the physical and the spiritual is ever present, so the lines of demarcation are not so clear.

Embodiment is the term that will be explored in this paper as descriptive of the belief that the body is spiritual, the spiritual embodied. Marcel used the term embodiment and incarnation interchangeably. In terms of embodiment, I have an ongoing spiritual relationship with my mother though our relationship is not present in the physical sense of us both being sensorially present. And yet, though not physically present, I have an embodied sense of her.

I am drawn to Marcel not only for his commitment to the study of the actualities of individual lived experience but also to his response to life understood as comprised of body and soul. At the same time that Marcel is committed to the physical emotional pulls and tensions of the everyday, he is deeply committed to the belief that there is an ontological, spiritual mystery underlying these concrete daily experiences. This ontological foundation is not based on sensory phenomenon nor on the vicissitudes of mood but rather on the constancy of faith, a faith in life as embodied soul.

It is interesting to note that Marcel's mother died when he was a very young child so he never knew his mother in the experiential daily sense and yet he felt her spirit with him throughout his life. Her presence in his life past her death was the initial impetus that took him to his understanding of ontology as spiritual.

To think beyond the <u>either/or</u> dichotomies created by philosophically perceiving life as primarily the spiritual and mental separated from the

physical body is to think towards complex questions about human life and yet appropriately so. Human life is complex. Perhaps one urge for thinking of existence as either body primarily (taking explanation to the positivistic scientific realm) or spirit (taking explanation to transcendent ideals) other than the prior explanation that there seems to be an urge to avoid feeling is the desire for simple explanations about our existence in which we may rest our minds.

Life understood as composed of body, mind, and soul is difficult to grasp intellectually. Experiencing that it is so has brought profound meanings to my life. And yet simultaneously, my choices have become significantly more confusing, perplexing, and at times so paradoxical as to paralyze my understandings and actions.

Marcel, through his concept of creative fidelity, raises questions relating to the complex issues that arise from human life understood as emotional, intellectual, and spiritual embodiment. Are there commitments that one can make that will not change based on what unfolds in the future? In other words, are there spiritual truths that are eternal, absolutely unaffected by the vicissitudes of experience? If there are these truths, how does the individual come to feel them if not through her own individual experiencing? What happens to commitments, the foundations of which are altered through the experiences of time? If one follows through on these commitments, is she

not risking betraying herself, or if faking that the commitment is still felt, does she not risk betraying or deceiving the other?

I am committed to the idea that meaning is made through the sharing of life between human beings. The questions that Marcel makes explicit in his work with creative fidelity I believe to be the questions that we are living out implicitly in relationship. I think that a lot of the suffering, self-betrayal, and deceit of one another could be redeemed and transformed if we could address the dilemmas and challenges explicitly of being embodied in the spirit of body, mind, and soul through a language in which the meanings could be felt by many different human beings, not just those committed to philosophical study.

In my dissertation, I am seeking a language that is more communicable than some of Marcel's thick and obscure philosophical language, for I wish to extend his meanings. I think that Marcel's work around creative fidelity if more widely understood would take us to richer, more textured, self-honest lives individually and to more compassionate, interesting, ethical relationships with one another. I also think that to understand the intricacies of creative fidelity takes us to lives that are less floundering in terms of freedom and responsibility.

In essence Marcel's voice calls out to us in a world where love is degraded, where experience is often inane and shallow, to re-collect the meaning of being human. Though the ways past this recollection are not

simple nor emotionally easy, recollecting the meaning of being human takes us to our souls. What could be more important?

Philosophical Foundations Underlying Creative Fidelity

"I think, I feel, I do; therefore, I exist." Creative fidelity has to do with all three, with the dialectic between thoughts, feelings, and actions. In response to the philosophical traditions that study thinking as a process abstracted from concrete experiencing, philosophers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber, Merleau-Ponty, and Marcel in their works wish to stress the importance of a different kind of thinking, thinking that is inextricably related to the experiencing of the individual and thus existential.

A simplified way to differentiate existential thought from the tradition of rational thought is that feelings and actions are necessarily a part of thinking existentially whereas rationalist thinking is not considered dialectically bound to feelings and actions. In the rational tradition, the thinking process is a realm considered in and of itself, not considered in terms of an individual's feelings about her experiencing nor necessarily foundational to her actions. Thought that is existential, however, is a synthesis of feelings about what has been experienced and the evolution of intentions toward future experiencing.

The quality with which I feel God is different from the quality of solely thinking God. When I feel God, I am thinking God and feeling the feelings contained for me within the thought God. When my actions are associated to

my feeling thoughts of God, that is born out of my own relationship to God, there is a quality to my acts that signifies me. My acts are mandated by what I have come to know, feel, believe through my own experiencing rather than mandated based on thoughts I have been taught to think but that are not related to my own existence.

The process of thinking abstracted from the concreteness of individual experiencing can result in brilliant ideas, creative imaginings, as it can lead to grossly destructive ideas, yet these ideas and imaginings, whatever their texture, are not founded on the fundamental and unavoidable struggles, questions, and confusions which life continually presents. Fundamental problems such as death, the perplexity of choice, relationship to others, commitment, separation and loss, and illness shape the context of every individual's life. The ways in which struggles are addressed and acted on determine a person's being-in-the-world.

Though the fruits of abstract thought can be profoundly enlightening ($E=mc^2$) or demeaning (Caucasians are superior) when acted on and in that sense consequential to human experiencing, abstract thought can also be irrelevant to human existence as in the example "purple cows dance at night." Whatever the impact abstract thought may have on human existence, this effect is a byproduct. Abstract thought is not founded on the inwardness of experiencing.

Conversely, the content of existential thinking is based on the individual's inwardness of experiencing. There is an interdependent relationship between experiencing existentially and existential thought, for existence can not be viscerally felt and responded to without this thinking. This thought does not start with abstraction that may later apply to concrete human life rather it begins with the questions and concerns of being human, situated in contexts with one another.

Existence can not be represented by one concept nor by a rational thought, according to Kierkegaard, not because existence is too "general, remote, or tenuous" to be conceived of in this way but rather because it is too "dense, concrete, and rich." Barrett (1958) paraphrases the passion of Kierkegaard as:

> I *am*; and this fact that I exist is so compelling and enveloping a reality that it cannot be reproduced thinly in any of my mental concepts, though it is clearly the life-and-death fact without which all my concepts would be void. (p. 162)

The classical meaning of philosophy is the love of wisdom. Philosophy in contemporary times could more aptly be called sophylogy which, if there were such a term, would indicate the way in which the love of wisdom has become the study of wisdom. The distinction between the love of wisdom and the study of wisdom is related correspondingly to the previous distinction between existential thought and abstract thought. It is quite

possible to partake in the study of wisdom as if a concept separate from the inwardness of experiencing. To study wisdom is to treat wisdom as a thought system external to inner experiencing and yet capable of advising and making distinctions about experience.

To seek, however, to know wisdom to the degree that one may say she loves wisdom, is to know wisdom from within the concrete experiencing of one's life. This kind of wisdom lives within the soul of an individual's consciousness. It is known through hard study, yet not solely in the book sense of study, rather more in the sense of living life in ways that enrich the study of books and studying books in ways that enrich the living of life. While the study of wisdom can be read from a paragraph in a book, the love of wisdom is known within one's bones.

> Wisdom is something different from enlightenment, it is different from reasoning. But wisdom is not science, wisdom is an elevation of the soul . . . it reasons little, nor does it proceed mathematically from concepts, through a series of syllogisms, in order to reach what it takes to be the truth ... but it speaks from the fullness of heart. (Hegel quoted in Küng, 1978/1991, pp. 131-132)

Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973) did not study philosophy so that he could know more but rather so that he could become more. His study took up the meaning of human experience and the purpose of life. Marcel used the phrase "creative fidelity" to name life lived in meaning and purpose. To find purpose in meaning it must be concretely felt, not abstractly thought. Fidelity

that is creative means that the commitment is personal. When one creates, one puts into form her subjective interpretation. For it to be creative, one does not mimic Kant rather integrates that work into her self expression.

There are many in this world presently expressing different kinds of information to one another. Never before has there been access to so many different ideas. Too easily existence reflects the propensity to recite ideas and information by heart that is not heart-felt. While efficient action may follow from memorized recitation, meaningful thoughts and actions do not evolve out of the memorization of ideas. Rather, thoughts and actions that hold meaning evolve out of the thoughtful struggle that accompanies the feelings of oneself in the world and the world in oneself. Doing what one is told to do is oftentimes quite different from living what one personally believes (Marcel, 1940/1964).

How do I know what I believe in? Or in other words how do I make my existence mine? To what or whom am I referring when I search for the who who is me? Do I look for me in the mirror, in your eyes, in a clinical laboratory, on my knees? Gabriel Marcel did not set out looking for the I in any particular way. He set out with questions about meaning. In living these questions, he found that the I reflected back to oneself is not an insulated I but rather an on-going creation textured by relationships with other Is and with God. How does this creation come to be?

Traditional Foundations of Consciousness

Philosophically the answer to the question about what the self can know of her being, the being of others, and the substance of the world has been addressed in terms of the subject-object distinction. The self is defined as the subject, the subject defined as the knower. The being of the other and all other aspects of the world are defined as the object and the object is defined as that which is known.

The discover of the subject which eventually leads to the juxtaposition of the object is René Descartes (1596-1650). Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) extends Descartes' process of subjectivity by making the distinction between the phenomenal world (the world as perceived, conceived, imagined, interpreted, analyzed and theorized about by the human mind) and the noumenal world (a kind of ultimate reality, the thing-in-itself). According to Kant, the noumenal world is unknowable by the human mind.

Kant argues that there is no such experience as knowing ultimate reality because once one "knows" an aspect of her world, it is no longer ultimate or pure, that is noumenal, but rather has become subjectified, that is phenomenal, through the experiencing of her senses and her correspondent categories of understanding (time, space, causality). Nothing certain can be said about the noumenal world except that it exists. It exists Kant believes due to the faculty of reason within consciousness that produces pure concepts (outside of the senses) such as God and justice.

These noumenal concepts can never be known by the subject experientially, therefore, all proofs of their existence are doomed to fail. Rather the noumenon can only be believed noetically, through reason alone. Ultimate reality (God, soul, justice, and freedom) is not substantive, not of substance, so it overreaches the subject's capacity to know. How then does one know that the noumenal world exists? Is whether or not it exists strictly based on the choice to believe or disbelieve? How does the faculty of reason come to be that produces the concepts of the noumenal world?

Kant's answer to these questions is to say that there is no logical necessity for conceiving of the world in terms of God, justice, freedom . . . (the noumenal) in the way that there is a logical necessity to conceive the world in terms of time, space, causality (the phenomenal). Rather there is an ethical necessity to conceive of the noumenal because without it, many humans would lose their hope and enthusiasm for being in the world. If living "as if" the noumenal exists results in humans living lives richer and more just then Kant reasons that faith in the existence of the noumenal is an essential faith.

If the noumenal is created as ethical necessity, who or what decides what pure concepts are important to live by? Why faith in God, freedom, and eternal justice, for example, rather than irrational will, violence, and sexuality? Kant answers that pure concepts are what they are because of the universal, abstract structure of the mind (Kant, 1787/1929).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) agrees with Kant that there is a universal structure to the mind that is constructive of reality but disagrees with Kant in Kant's concept of mind structure as static and unchanging. The universal structures of the mind change historically from period to period, according to Hegel. Hegel describes this evolving consciousness in terms of a systematic philosophy of the mind.

In this system, the evolving mind is both the foundation and the aim of reality. Mind (*Geist*) is reality, reality is God. All three (mind, reality, and God) are historically contextualized. Through introspection, reality progresses, regresses, then advances until the ultimate moment of Absolute Geist. Absolute Geist, according to Hegel, is initially expressed aesthetically, then progresses to the degree that it may be expressed religiously, and finally meets the perfect form of expression in the philosophical. Philosophy to Hegel was the most supreme form of knowing; through it, all of existence could be thought (Hegel, 1807/1967).

In the philosophical works of these profound thinkers, there is the common belief that ontology can be explained through rational thought. Hegel, for example, dissolves the difference between epistemology and ontology when he writes that the real is the rational (mind/spirit), the rational is the real, meaning that existence and thought are identical. Kierkegaard opposed both the French and German rationalist traditions when he claims that existence can not be grasped, described, nor understood

through rational thought. I can not think my existence, Kierkegaard thought, I must live it (Kierkegaard, 1940/1962). Whatever may be explained in terms rationalist and definitive is not the struggling person but rather a subject insulated from the impact and flux of experience and therefore not a living being, not a self at all.

Foundations of Existential Consciousness

Philosophers such as Marcel, Buber, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty join Kierkegaard in protesting the predesignation of existence into categories and explanations. They hold that to categorize experience into rational idealistic classifications is to abstract the self from its concrete experience. When, for example, existence is classified in terms of subject/object categories, object and subject are necessarily objectified.

From the idealist perspective subject and object are thought to be composed of essential preexistent categories. Depending on the way in which the particular philosopher defines what he takes to be imperative about the subject and the object, the interaction between knowing and knowledge is predetermined based on these expectations. What takes place in actual experience is irrelevant; the focus is on predetermination, on what necessarily will happen.

Phenomenologists do not disagree about there being some order to consciousness through which experience is interpreted yet they understand the process as an interaction between the self and the world that is

individually interpreted by the self who is experiencing and therefore not predictable. The self, phenomenologically, is a living being situated in the world, both affecting and being affected by other selves, places, material objects and also by memories, feelings, imaginings. Experience itself is not experienced in terms of the subject necessarily acting on the object in a particular way, the object necessarily imposing on the subject, rather there is constantly a relational interaction between the self and the particular situation, an interaction not predetermined.

In any given moment, a myriad of possible experiences are potential. Within consciousness, one attends to or does not attend to a particular experience. The process through which consciousness attends to experience is not based on an internal subject/object formulization. To think this formula as the basis for selection is to define experience as rational and clearly organized when experience is just as potentially irrational as rational, confusing as clarifying and paradoxical as it is certain.

In place of explaining experience in terms defined by preorganized formula, phenomenologists seek language which is descriptive of particular experiences in order to grasp what is happening in the moment and in existence as a whole. Idealism aims for meaning in the abstract; phenomenology for meaning in the concreteness of experience. "All philosophies based on abstraction have so transcended the natural order, and depersonalized man, that the religious life is made unintelligible and must be

explained away in terms of psychological urges or sociological forces" (Kingston, 1961, p. 61).

Phenomenological language awaits the moment, the happening. It is a language of contingency attendant to the constant interactions of the self in the world. Marcel, in *Du refus à l'invocation* (1940), writes:

> What brings me nearer to a being, what binds me effectively to him, is certainly not to know that he could verify and ratify an addition or a division that I could have done on my own. Much rather, it is to appreciate that he (like me) has undergone certain trials, that he is subject to the same vicissitudes, that he has had a childhood, that he has been loved, that other beings have depended on him and have set their hopes in him; it is also to realize that he is called to suffer, to wither, to die. (Marcel quoted in Kingston, 1961, p. 61)

Instead of languaging imperatives about what must be happening, phenomenological language holds meanings descriptive of what is being experienced by the individual through her own interpretations. Prior assumptions are suspended. What is sought phenomenologically is a love of wisdom rather than a definitional rational certainty.

Foundations of Creative Fidelity

What is the manifestation of wisdom in terms of our created and continuing existence? Wisdom does not come strictly from reading other people and their words. It is a culmination of the ongoing inward synthesis of the self experiencing. It is not known through external imposition but

through inwardness. As Plato said "the eyes are the windows to the soul" and therein wisdom is found.

The rationale of reason instructs as if reality is logically and necessarily this way rather than that. There is another vision that is valid but not rational. Marcel called this vision the meta-problematic meaning those aspects of our lives that are not problems to be solved (they are unsolvable) but are mysteries to be encountered. We need to develop both our reason and our propensity to embrace mystery, according to Marcel, for it is the internal conversation that encompasses both the rational and the mysterious that takes us to our wisdom.

Nietzsche (1844-1900) is remembered for proclaiming "God is dead." Marcel interprets this phrase of Nietzsche, as Kierkegaard and Tillich do, to mean that the conventionality of Christianity, a project of mass consciousness, has killed God. When God dies, the essence of being human through which hope, grace, and freedom are known is obscured. Hence the progress of despiritualized materialism reigns and human life becomes technologized. The world seems to reflect a sort of hyper-reality rather than a human reality and then we find ourselves choosing the arid life that closes the inwardness of existence out. According to Marcel, it is not necessary that we do so. In fact, Marcel says, if human life is to survive in its majesty and wonder, we must wake up to who we are (Marcel, 1955).

One of the most difficult aspects of Marcel's work to grasp is the way in which he brings his ideas about the particular aspects of our personal life, that each human being is unique in and of herself, into conjunction with the awesome universal spiritual dimension of human life, that there is some essential ontological foundation that unites all human individuals. His philosophy merges the concrete and particular of one's everyday human dilemma with the eternal holy presence. Marcel asks what does it mean to be **I** and at the same time to be universally defined by **you** and **the eternal**? Here is the core of his complex, multifaceted, and challenging works (Marcel, 1950).

Marcel's philosophy is at one time worldly and other-worldly. While studying him, one is asked to comprehend that which is pragmatic (the doings of existence) together with an ontological mystery (the being of existence). His work requires us to approach our understanding through our own concreteness, addressing basic questions and activities we are faced with daily, and at the same time to respond in our consciousness to the obscure wonder of the divine mystery.

In that the way we are invited to be in the western world is through a dichotomized either/or, Marcel's work, indeed, is challenging. In Marcel, human life is described as secular and religious, thus, we must both choose willfully and surrender to grace. We are, he tells us, incarnated in physical body and are spiritual consciousness. We are alone, and yet, always together. Both either and or are crucial to grasping the fullness and meaning of human

life. That we have in general failed to include both in our consciousness has led to a truncated perspective, a perspective that ultimately prevents the full realization of human life.

Marcel calls us to live a consciousness mediated by the spirit and the flesh. This mediated dialectic makes possible knowledge that has fundamentally to do with being, the experience of deeply loving another, God as humane, and ethical thought and action that impacts and addresses our lives (Marcel, 1952).

When studying Marcel, one is brought face to face with the complexities that we tend to avoid through our traditional philosophical attempts to organize human life into systems of thought. There is within us a tendency to escape our very existence which leads us to find caverns of the mind to reside in that shield us from the vicissitudes of our human experience. For those of us interested in material tastes, we have many caverns of technology from which to choose to hide, laboratories where we study life as if it is a material, objective entity that can be "still-lifed," captured, and studied. If our intent is to avoid the complexities and pains of human life, any method of study, be the foundation mind or material, can be accommodated for the purpose of avoidance.

When systems of avoidance are adopted, what is missed is a personal commitment to truth and knowledge. Belief about what is true becomes based not on personal knowledge and experience but on what is prescribed by

religious or secular bureaucracy. This way of believing is unacceptable existentially for existential belief is phenomenological, based on the interpretation of experiencing by the individual.

The ontological basis of existentialism is the individual experiencing experience and therefore experiencing is the foundation of existential belief. In that experiences and beliefs are inextricably related, beliefs are comprised not of abstract concepts but rather of concrete personal hopes, dreams, desires, and are therefore known viscerally.

Since existentialism calls for beliefs unfolding out of experience, existentialism is sensitive to the <u>how</u> of the belief (the process of coming to believe) rather than the <u>what</u>. The essence of belief is grounded in the confrontation and struggle with life. Existentially, since the outcome of the struggle can not be prescribed, how are beliefs arrived at?

For Marcel, there is purpose to the existential confrontation and struggle with concrete life so any beliefs that evolve from engaged concrete life are likewise purposeful. Much of Marcel's life was committed to searching for, uncovering, and constructing purpose and meaning. Both uncover and construct are used here because for Marcel meaning-making is a process of both uncovering and constructing. There is essence to be uncovered whether or not an individual does so. However, existentially, the meaningful essence is irrelevant unless the individual uncovers it.

Marcel indicates that what brings meaning into the world, directly into human lives, is the individual being receptive to the deeper ontological, spiritual essence of existence and then living what she uncovers through her actions. The constructive aspect of purposeful life, Marcel believed, has to do with the choice to be receptive to and embracing of this meaningful essence or purpose and to live, to act, out of it.

The choice to be sensitive to a deeper meaning is a critical choice in terms of living a life of creative fidelity. In being receptive to the nuances of life, we attend to experiences that inform us what we believe. If we deny our experiences, insulate ourselves from one another, our experiences do not permeate our consciousness. Then, our beliefs are based on prescribed preordained principles and thus are not part of our inward felt experiencing. These beliefs are not creative nor "fidelitous" in the existential sense.

Marcel was committed to the notion that each individual life is unique in and of itself; therefore, the essential life could not be prescribed but must be uncovered by each in her own way. What this essential purpose is and how individuals come to know this in the existential particularized personal way were the questions that Marcel asked most of his life. His commitment was to an intellectual spiritual search for the ontological meaning and the ethics of living this meaning. Philosophers similarly committed are Buber, Kierkegaard, Jaspers, and other spiritual existentialists who struggle with the meaning of God in human life.

The Influence of Josiah Royce on Marcel

It is not surprising that early in Marcel's studies, he turned to the ideas of American philosophers in furthering his understanding of the relationship between universal purpose as it relates to individuals in their lived lives. America as a nation, at least mythically, was a symbol of the struggle to live as individuals with liberty united as one nation -- "one nation under God and with justice and liberty for all." In this sense the philosophy of America was formed out of a philosophical mindset that merged the European absolutist movement (that sought essential timeless concepts -- absolute truths, absolute authority) with a revolutionary spirit that was a protest against authoritarian rule in support of individual sovereignty and freedom.

Josiah Royce (1855-1916) was one of the philosophers from America who Marcel turned to. Royce was born in Grass Valley, California. He studied first at the University of California (Berkeley) and then at Johns Hopkins University, completing his doctorate in 1878. In addition he studied at Göttingen in Germany while reading extensively Schopenhauer, Schelling, Kant, and Hegel. William James invited Royce to come to Harvard to teach in 1882. Until his death, he was one of the mainstays of the philosophy department there.

Marcel studied Royce and published a book entitled Royce's metaphysics in the 1910s. The english edition was later published in 1956 at which time

Marcel wrote a preface remarking on why he studied Royce. Royce's thinking was representative of the philosophical struggle between absolute idealism and existential concerns and in that lay his brilliance for Marcel (Marcel, 1910/1956).

Fundamentally, Royce had his roots in middle european idealism in the traditions of Kant and Hegel. In his beliefs that there is an ultimate truth, Royce was like them but he extended their work in that he was committed to the concreteness of the individual's everyday experience. While Royce believed that there is some higher mind, some Absolute Knower, God that exists, Royce recognized that in our everyday consciousness we usually do not attend to this knowing. Though individuals get glimpses from time to time into this complete meaning, often they are blinded to the greater picture. Their blindness must not prevent them from having faith that there is a greater meaning. It is in living out of this faith that the individual becomes embodied in purpose and thus embodied in a life that is just and meaningful. For Royce, faith in the Absolute Knower, God, is the actualizer of Truth, for faith grounds the particular individual life in some greater unity of purpose.

Crucial for Royce and his relationship to the work of Marcel is his understanding of faith as a choice rather than a given. Individuality is contingent on choice. According to Royce, the divine will is not imposed, rather the individual is free to choose either to live out of holy

understanding or to live out of some entirely different system of knowing. This existential aspect of Royce's work defines the manifestation of reality as individual choosing.

> Unity is not given to the ego. The ego must confer unity on itself. Nothing there exists in itself. The study of the variations, anomalies and illusions of self-consciousness are enough to show this. As soon as we have explained the chaotic confusion of our ego, or rather of our empirical 'egos,' what will remain with us is the conviction that we must possess or create for ourselves, despite this confusion, a principle which will enable us to recognize that portion of the world's life which must be, which will be, ours. (Marcel, 1910/1956, p. 42)

In this quote from Royce's Metaphysics, Marcel explains Royce's emphasis on individuality as becoming existent through knowing that is unique and singular for the person. What becomes complex is understanding the basis of the foundations that order individual lives. Again the question has to do with how we come to know what it is that we believe.

This would suggest that there are infinite choices, from the sublime to the ridiculous, the holy to the profane, from which any individual can choose to believe. A person might structure her life on a belief in absurdity (that nothing has meaning), consumerism (defined by the zeal to produce objects), asceticism (the no-thing of eastern thought), love (the union of care), creativity (imagination into form), God (living the divine will), destructiveness (violence toward life), greed (questing after more and more), fame (seeking status), the assertion of power, and ad infinitum. If there are

infinite possibilities from which to make my finite choice, then how do I come to know this choice?

One of the questions that an individual might come to in choosing the what of her belief is an inquiry into the purpose of life. On the ontological -- does there exist an essential reality on which I base my life? On the ethical -- is there a particular just way to live? If so, on what is this based? Or, is my purpose based on some aesthetic vision that attends to structuring experience within certain creative forms that enhance life with meaning and pleasure?

For Royce, the human purpose is ontological in that it is based on the divine order that he believes encompasses human life. In the first half of his book Royce's metaphysics, Marcel describes Royce's ontological explanation of how it is that God must exist. Marcel's explanation of Royce's ontological proof is complex and difficult to grasp. It is possible for one to get the impression that Marcel himself had difficulty understanding Royce's description of God, the Absolute Knower.

The confusion has to do with Royce's attempt to be non-absolutist and therefore focused on the concrete individual experience of God and yet Royce structures his ideas for the necessary existence of God in an abstract non-concrete way. For example, Royce wanted to resist thinking of God as the Absolute Cause for human experience, for he was committed to the concrete unfolding of the individual life. He was opposed to any concept of predestination. And yet Marcel argues that Royce's explanations often end in

a cause-effect fatalism that negates the individual experience, a message that "if God exists, there must be these truths about human existence."

Though Royce attempted to define the Absolute Knower in terms directly related to human experience, Marcel felt that he never quite succeeded in this. In fact, where Royce ultimately ends up conceptually is in his notion that the world is the manifestation of the purpose and will of an Absolute Knower/God.

In that Royce attempted to include the individual relationship to God as critical to the universal purpose being manifested, in actuality he consistently stuck to the induction "if God, then . . ." Yet it is in his attempt to address the individual life (the relationship between the many and the One/God), that is in the questions he raised, that he enlightened Marcel in spiritually and intellectually enriching ways.

Marcel refers to the influence of Royce's ideas about loyalty on his own concept of fidelity. What does Royce mean when he emphasizes loyalty to purpose? Marcel interprets Royce to mean that loyalty has to do with coming to meet God through a committed consciousness. Though Royce emphasizes commitment, his work does not indicate the individual way toward a commitment to know God. If the commitment is not existentially arrived at, then it is externally enforced or coerced or instructed. Marcel asks Royce, how does the infinite speak in our finite lives? Does the all-encompassing

Absolute Knower do more to compromise the individuality of beings than to guarantee it, Marcel asks?

We could turn to a lecture Royce gave on the later problems of idealism where he said:

> If it is the truth of life, i.e., if the truth is a living and not a bloodless realm of abstract categories, then the truth must involve issues, struggles, conquests, and conquests over aspects of life that, when viewed in their abstraction, are distinctly evil and irrational. (Royce, 1919, p. 256)

This is the existential voice of Royce, portraying his commitment to the process and warning against defining the struggle as undesirable. The only way to prevent error, irrationality, and evil is for truth to be fixed, a truth which is born into and to which all adhere. Loyalty to the divine purpose, however, is <u>not</u> loyalty to a fixed truth, rather it was Royce's belief that each individual must come to her understanding of what truth is through her own experience. This points up again the complexity of Royce's thought. (Marcel felt that he had failed ultimately to support this existential segment of his work).

Royce does believe that there is an infinite Truth and yet human beings are not necessarily born into knowing this truth. Truth is realized through a certain experiencing that reflects loyalty to the principle of faith. In other words, the individual does not know Truth but must have faith that Truth is, making possible for herself experiences through which Truth will be

revealed. In that an individual does not know until she knows, there must be room in human communities for error, irrationality, and evil, according to Royce (Royce, 1919).

If humans come to know Truth through the experiencing of their experience, that is through the interpretation of their lived existence, then struggle, error, and confusion are necessary to coming to know. If there was not struggle, then Truth would be known prior to experience.

Acceptance of error and efforts to correct the ignorance that takes a person to error are emblematic of communities of care and learning. Ignorance rather than evil is what takes people to wrongdoing, according to Royce; therefore, redemption is an educational and therefore communal task. When a person errs, communally, a deed is constructed for the individual that will redeem her for her misdoing and at the same time improve the community, making it a better place than it was before the wrong was committed.

This is the voice of Royce that spoke to Marcel's existential and ethical pulse. There is struggle, Marcel agreed, and there must be. His passion about Royce's ideas led him to inquire more deeply into meanings about spiritual communities that embrace individuality, loyalty, and redemption, communities in which religiosity is affirmed as struggle. This inquiry into spiritual communality led Marcel to some of the foundational thoughts underlying his concepts of creative fidelity. On the one hand Royce

acknowledges the individual struggle; on the other hand he believes that a divine goal of redemption and spiritual community preexists the individual.

How can one recognize this spiritual community? How can one find oneself in such a community? Marcel felt that Royce did not answer these questions. He believed that though Royce was committed to the concrete individual life, quoting Royce's idea "individuality is neither a thing nor an abstract concept. It is an embodied purpose. More exactly it is a new type of interest in the world and in God" (Marcel, 1910/1956, pp. 101-102), that Royce was caught in an absolute idealist trap that explained human life as beginning, becoming, and being with God defined not through human experience but accepted because of a preordained notion of God.

Marcel suggests that perhaps Royce remained enslaved by a logical monism. "Royce does not go beyond the metaphysically meaningless idea that every finite experience is in the absolute experience and that all is contained and completed in God" (Marcel, 1910/1956, p. 170). Though Royce encourages individual choice, he also thinks in terms of the choice (absolute will) in a sense choosing the individual. For further insights into the means through which the individual purpose is revealed to or constructed by the individual, Marcel turned to William Hocking.

The Influence of William Hocking

William Hocking (1873-1966) inspired Marcel's work in a profound way. Hocking was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and like Royce, was studied in

european idealism. Most particularly, Hocking was interested in the philosophy of religion, an interest which led him to Harvard where he was educated by Josiah Royce and William James. After completing an undergraduate and graduate degree at Harvard, he spent most of his teaching career there until he retired in 1943.

Hocking's book The Meaning of God in Human Experience (1912) was a revelation to Marcel. In his autobiographical essay Marcel writes: "Hocking remains for me an unsurpassed example of what a philosopher can be, in the fullest sense of the word, in a topsy-turvy world like ours" (Marcel, 1969, p. 55). In fact so impressed was Marcel by Hocking's work that he dedicated his 1927 Metaphysical Journal to him. There was such an important intellectual and personal relationship between Marcel and Hocking that it is interesting to read Hocking for clues to Marcel's search.

The first part of Hocking's book is fundamentally phenomenological. In it he writes of the relationship between ideas and feelings. Feelings are crucial because they lead the individual to ideas about what is important, meaningful, appealing. Initially the feeling signifies that something is happening that is significant and yet the meaning is not yet grasped. Feelings culminate in certain knowings or ideas. Living the feelings is like living the questions until understanding evolves. If the way to understanding has been through feeling, then the understandings are reflective of human experiencing. In being committed to these understandings that evolve from

one's feelings, a person finds ownership of her existence. These concepts of understanding, commitment, and deep-felt meaning are foundational aspects for Marcel of the concept creative fidelity.

In the middle section of Hocking's work, he abandons his phenomenological voice, vacillating between a voice that is idealistic (that God exists is an absolute truth) to a voice that is philosophically scientific (there is evidence for the existence of God). He seems to abandon his belief in the importance of feeling-ideas and takes on the task of proving that there must be God in human experience. Absent from this section is a feeling of the presence of God in human life, rather Hocking exhibits a cerebral approach to attempt to prove God's existence.

There is a similar relationship here between Hocking's stated commitment to knowledge that is born out of felt experience versus static thoughts and Royce's stated commitment to the individual concrete life rather than to an *a priori* absolute. Yet in both of their works they become entangled in traditions of thought removed from commitments to the "felt life." Hocking appears to be confused in his effort to prove God. He writes in a reductive Newtonian mentality void of passionate feeling and commitment, the importance of which he had previously established in his work. The reading of Hocking's argument about God is somewhat intellectually paralyzing and confused.

Hocking in the last section of the book returns again to his phenomenological voice, emphasizing the process through which the individual comes to meaning in her life. He explores the phenomenological method as analogous to the process of worship in the life of the mystic. It is apparent in this latter section why Hocking was important to Marcel, for Hocking exhibits here his commitment to and interest in exploring the concrete feeling experience that is available to the individual. Through describing the phenomenon of mystical worship, Hocking is in essence describing the process that is applicable to any experience that is experienced phenomenologically.

The suspension of presumption is encouraged by Hocking in order that the individual may with less bias and prejudice be receptive to experiencing. He describes experience as a dialectic between the intellect and intuition.

> In the typical mystic temperament we expect to find a certain openness of spirit, such as readily accepts a present inspiration as its law. The encasements of mental attitude in such persons are never fast-set: the limberness of their inner substance promises well for continuance of growth. At his worst, the mystic is impulsive and childish; at his best he retains something of childhood, its tenderness, its freshness of impression, its unsatiated wonder, its generosity: he has that simplicity and teachableness which are found in the very young and the very great. (Hocking, 1912, pp. 400-401)

The openness of spirit referred to here is similar to the spirit of phenomenological epoché.

This "certain openness of spirit" refers to the critical relationship between ideas and feelings. The "present inspiration" is the consciousness of feelings that culminate in spiritual understandings. Feelings are essential to this process of coming to know for they are a conduit from a person's most inward existence to a wider universal knowing. "Feeling does not markedly accompany a thought except in so far as that thought touches the springs of my own musculature: feeling is the idea doing work in me" (Hocking, 1912, p. 116). When ideas (understanding) retain a living connection to feelings, they remain pertinent to existence. When this connection is severed, ideas become detached from the source of life. The individual becomes closed off from knowing existentially her relationship to spiritual meaning.

What is makes no difference. That which produces difference is consciousness of what is. Whether the object of knowledge is God, a person, concepts, material objects, one arrives at meaning of the object through what Hocking calls one's "apperceptive mass." This apperceptive mass is what determines for a person the feeling-worth of the world. It consists of "instincts in part, organic capacities for enjoyment, experiences also, and all sorts of associated fancies and memories and ideas." Hocking goes on to say that the apperceptive mass "is nothing other than idea; idea being but experience itself in all its life and infinitude prepared for this very work of meeting new experience with justice" (Hocking, 1912, p. 128). This definition of idea is most definitely the feeling-idea.

Hocking's concept of "meeting new experience with justice" defines justice as an openness of spirit, a receptivity, to what is before one. While every individual brings to new experience her ideas from prior experiences, the evolution of these ideas is crucial to determining whether experience is met with justice. If during experiencing, interpretation is imposed by an other on the person actually experiencing, then the person experiencing will be conscious of the interpretation of the other but not of her own personal experiencing. Further experience she has will then be interpreted through ideas of the other, interpretations not her own. This process of interpreting experience produces what Hocking calls unjust experience. Contrary to this, when a person experiences (interprets) the feeling-worth of experience through her apperceptive mass, the mind becomes more free, more inventive, and open to relevant connections that are possible between the moment and the individual's being.

The feeling-value of the object of our knowing has to do with how involved we are with our ideas about the object. Every new idea that one comes to through feeling as well as non-felt experience is added to what Hocking calls the idea-world of the person. If the ideas woven into the fabric of our evolving idea-world are disconnected from feeling, then the fabric is more like a mechanized thought system rather than a textured reflection of the existence of the person as a knowing, believing, feeling being. Hocking

speaks of meeting experience with justice (or experience well-met) as concomitant with love.

> Experience-well-met . . . which entering into the bone and blood of the Idea (for the most part unreachable in speech) builds human quality and human worth. Love itself, then, if we are right, is not a thing apart from knowledge. That which we love is not indeed learning, or logic-skill, but some reality-thought at work upon an actual experience, creating there the very material of beauty and value....Love and sympathy we often think of as feeling, in direct contrast to idea. It is clear however that they both are cognizances of another, do in some way make the leap between my own soul and the soul of some one not-myself, intend to put me in veritable rapport with what thought is passing there, the very tour de force of objectivity. . . . Interest in objectivity, which we have found at the root of all idea-making, is love itself directed to reality. . . . Love and sympathy are the activity of the idea. And in their exercise, the idea is enlarged. The lover widens his experience as the non-lover cannot. He adds to the mass of his idea-world, and acquires thereby enhanced power to appreciate all things. (Hocking, 1912, pp. 135-136)

Love is essential to the process of experiencing if the knowledge that evolves from the experience is to hold meaning.

It is because of their love for the Absolute that Hocking turned to the mystics in his search to understand the meaning of God in human experience. Because of this love, the mystic is willing to devote her attention to meeting God in the silence and openness of the moment. In devotion to God, the mystic <u>dis</u>associates from (mental) thoughts, thoughts that result in alienation from visceral feelings. Feelings embodied are necessary for receptivity to spiritual being. It is through feelings of love, according to Hocking, that we willfully suspend our prejudgments and the social

consensus about the object of our love, receiving the object wholeheartedly and with more acute attentiveness to who or what is before us.

Hocking is saying that to know meaningfully, there must be desire to know. This love for knowledge is reflected in the will. Is it the will alone which makes possible the mystic's knowledge of the spiritual realm? It is here that we return again to questions about whether what is real is uncovered through grace or constructed through the determination of will. Does the mystic's will construct objects of faith or is the absolute there waiting for the individual to will to know it? Hocking defines will more as being receptive to what is before one rather than constructing what is before one.

Hocking believes this receptivity or will to know is crucial to faith, for it is this openness to the idea of the sacred that makes possible the revelation of experience as sacred. Sacred experience does not come to one empirically nor intellectually rather the sacred is met when there is faith that the sacred exists. "Faith is not only difficult for reason; it is distinctly diffident toward reason. Its origin, then, and its firmness must be due to some other power, presumably to will" (Hocking, 1912, p. 144). The ancient ontological argument for God's existence was "I have an idea of God; therefore, God exists." Hocking argues that there must be more than a mere idea of God. He prefers to state, "I have an idea of God, therefore, I have an experience of God" (Hocking, 1912, p. 309).

It is my idea that there is God which makes the experience I have possible and yet the actuality of the experience also has to do with there being something to experience. It is true that without the I (the will), there is no experience to experience; it is also true without something to experience, there is no experience for the I. A person's will opens her to a particular realm of experience, inviting the meaning of that realm of experience into her inwardness and existence.

In the realm of sacred experience, the ineffable within (the self) is receptive to the ineffable without (God) and a relationship is formed between the person and God. Worship then is a willful intense thinking, according to Hocking, that has to do with thoughtful yielding to the divine rather than with sensations or reason. In worship the universality of thought about the divine is overcome and "God is appropriated uniquely to the individual self" (Hocking, 1912, p. 342). In the act of worship all habits of mind must be transcended so that the individual may meet God; therefore, to describe it is to seek language beyond these habits of the mind. It is difficult to say what it is, rather one can describe feelings that indicate that it is.

Why is this mystical process of knowing and being important, according to Hocking? In the spiritual sense, the process is important in that through it God is experienced by individuals. Because the meaning of God, according to Hocking, becomes present through a person's individual experience of God, the inner subjective dimension of the mystical process is necessary.

It is this subjective dimension of mystical knowing which is important to understand in the existential epistemological sense, for it affirms the relevance of feelings. When feelings are affirmed, what is also affirmed is that for which an individual cares. When a person attends to what she cares about, meaning is felt. In this sense, the mystical process is exhibitive of meaning making.

Further, the mystical process is a way to inventive knowledge and understanding. In that habits of mind (beliefs) are suspended, the individual is more widely and deeply receptive to the novelty of the moment, making possible insights otherwise obscured and barriered.

Finally, Hocking emphasizes the mystical process as important in terms of how it may lead to ethical qualities. Because of the mystic's spirit of openness, she is unfettered by conventional judgments, is not bound by definitive ideas about experience, and therefore lives in a mood of surrendered receptivity. During worship the mystic is not thinking through categories and preordained conclusions rather comes to experience with an openness of heart receptive to the majesty of the spirit. The experience of meeting the spirit is not analyzed into parts but rather is viscerally experienced and woven into the whole of the person's apperceptive consciousness or idea-world. It is this receptivity of consciousness that Hocking believes important to an ethics of compassion, a world in which humans receive one another more full-heartedly.

Thus in all of the above-mentioned ways, the mystical process exhibits a way towards the experience of God, oneself, insight, and compassion for one another. Hocking in a sense is prescribing this process as one concrete way in which people come to understandings that when conjoined may be creative of a insightful, ethical, and meaningful community. To come to one another in a vein of openness and acceptance as the mystics come to the sacred moment could set the context for relationships of less rigidity and more possibility, that is relationships less psychologically predictable.

If the mystical way exemplifies a way of coming to the world that centers on subjective meaning and the sacred, that makes way for novelty, and that requires a mood of compassionate non-judgmental inclusivity, then the mystical consciousness integrated into our more secular consciousness is a way to have the experience of God in our daily, worldly lives. Near the end of Hocking's book, he begins to reflect on the life of the prophet, defining the prophet as a mystic who lives in the world rather than the monastic mystic who for all intents and purposes lives "outside" of the world.

Hocking echoes here the notion of the spiritual community found in Royce's work. As previously mentioned, Marcel argued that Royce assumes the existence of spiritual community without informing how this community comes to be. Hocking, however, in his work on the meaning that is created by the union of ideas with feelings and by exemplifying the mystical experience as a way in which the idea-feelings are lived out, provides insights

into the phenomenological way in which an individual may approach her world spiritually and thus create communions of meaning.

Hocking writes prophetically about the meaning and purpose of the integrity that exists in spiritual communion:

> It means . . . that we maintain our discontent, returning again and again to the demand that our existence shall find itself justified in our own eyes. The first practical principle of religion is to hold without weakening the right of every individual life to know its own worth. We must not let reality go, this reality which has produced us, until it satisfies us: it must yield us the idea which unites what we most deeply desire with what is. This is the prayer of Jacob; and in a fundamental sense it is the first prayer of every human being. We are right in wishing to see first and be loyal afterward. (Hocking, 1912, p. 436)

Hocking is emphasizing here the ontological perspective that there is a reality that precedes a person's existential life. This reality is multi-faceted so makes possible different experiencing. Hocking thinks that this reality can be willed by the individual to be supportive and encouraging of the worth of her being. The individual must demand this of life wholeheartedly. When this demand is fulfilled, there is spiritual integrity, for her world then supports, encourages, allows, and reflects the unfolding of sacred existence.

Initially this sounds like a romanticized ontology, as if there is an easy route to a sacred self/world relationship. Hardly does Hocking intend to romanticize this relationship. To demand of the world that it support the

particular individual life requires that a person strive towards the cultivation of a certain self.

> It means . . . that we understand clearly to what self this right belongs, and cultivate that self. This right to see does not belong to our complex and strident personality which goes about, thinking by omnipotent effort to earn its happiness and its certainty. It belongs only to that in us which is simple and sincere. The sincere is that which is moved by necessity not by effort...the genuine will is the will which goes forth from effortless attention, that is to say, from love -- and that is to say, from sight. We have the right to see first and then be loyal afterward only because unless we see we cannot be loyal, nor in any sense sincere or moral. (Hocking, 1912, pp. 436-437)

It is important, Hocking believes, that the individual pause away from willful, worldly pursuits to see her self and the world in spiritual rather than material terms.

With this more inward seeing, what is meaningful and important to believe in will be realized. This voluntary passivity of the will, according to Hocking, in which concerns about achievement and acquisition are de-emphasized leads to an involuntary passivity where necessity (a reality emphasizing individual sacred worth) shows itself.

Hocking throughout his work describes this dialectical relationship between the will that wills passivity and the opening this makes possible for the spiritual dimension of existence to present itself. The dialectic is between a voluntary passivity that leads to an involuntary happening where sacred dimensions of existence are revealed. Hocking emphasizes that the

individual must see, that is experience, a certain ontological moment first in order to be loyal to the truth of that moment afterwards. Yet in order "to see," he suggests that individual will must be towards a more simple than ambitious life so that the deeper meanings become present.

In other words, we must prepare to see before we can see. To be committed to this preparation, what is required is faith, a faith that there is "something" important to experience and that it is desirable. Faith makes possible a certain kind of experiencing which culminates in a loyalty to that revealed through the "seeing" of experience. The fundamental law of religious life to Hocking is this right to be loyal only to what one has experienced.

Woven into Hocking's own beliefs is his perspective that the world is so created that a simple view of the world is possible and not only possible but necessary in order for the individual to have a life of integrity.
He says that it is the simple even more than the subjective that we must appeal to. He believes that the *a priori* aspect of both the subjective and the objective is simple and that the "anticipated attainment" of the individual life that unfolds out of this simplicity is the most desirable kind of concrete life. In commanding simplicity the person is able to see reality in the "primitive terms of self, universe, and the present moment (where everything begins from the beginning)" (Hocking, 1912, p. 438).

Hocking describes prayer as important in coming to a simple and complete vision of the whole.

> I use the word 'pray,' because, in the end, there is no other word which conveys that attitude of will in which effort is so combined with non-effort, and self-assertion with consciousness of absolute dependence. Nor do I know why this word should be translated into anything more scholastic. The insight we require is both a right and a gift, the justest gift in all experience; we dare not be too proud to comply with its evident conditions. We must know that in doing these things, we are already using a degree of mystic insight: we are relying upon an attachment to the whole which is too deep in us to be lost or overcome; we are striving to 'enter into ourselves,' to recognize this attachment for what it is, the love of the God of that alienated world. This is prayer. And the answer to prayer is whatever of simplicity, of naturalness, of original appreciation, is brought into our view of things by this act of obedience of the mind to its absolute object. In proportion as our prayer is honest, we shall find ourselves less thinking, and more seeing; and we can turn again to meet experience with so much better poise and understanding. (Hocking, 1912, p. 439)

This recalls Plato's notion of *anamnesis* or knowing again what has been forgotten in the work and rush of the everyday and in the activities of ambitious strivings. What is recollected in prayer, in devotion to simplicity, is "the whole which is too deep in us to be lost or overcome."

After receiving the prophetic insights from one's inward receptivity to the spiritual whole (or the One), the person ought turn back to the world, in Hocking's belief, for the purpose of contributing to the enrichment of humanity. The prophet judges her truth in terms of its bearing on her everyday experience. If the truth does not harmonize with daily lived experience, the prophet must abandon the truth. The certainty or the

uncertainty of truth is assured only after the spiritual truth is lived in the midst of earthly experience.

> The truth of the world is necessary to give certainty to the truth of God. 'It is the possibility of comprehending these experiences,' says Delacroix, 'of living them, of utilizing them in action, which here serves as a touchstone of their truth. Intuition is of no value save in an ensemble with which it accords.' (Hocking, 1912, p. 449)

Hocking says that he agrees with Delacroix and yet he points out that since what he has derived is that "the certainty of the world is derived from the certainty of God in the first place, the world can hardly withhold its consent" (Hocking, 1912, p. 449).

The world is known as the world of this God and God as the God of this world. Again, here is the dialectical relationship between faith, will, and sight (knowing). It is a confusing dialectic because it ultimately leads to a circular idea of reality rather than a linear understanding. It is difficult to grasp in linear fashion (this follows from that) what Hocking is saying about the self and the world and the relationship of meaning and significance that ensues. Because faith is inextricably related to the experience of what is, according to Hocking, as the experience of what is is inextricably related to faith that it is and because will is an integral part of both faith and experience, there is not a systematic formula that explains coming to know the real. Rather, what Hocking presents is more of a concept that might be most clearly described as

a gestalt whereby faith, will, and knowing through seeing are experienced simultaneously.

What Hocking's work contributes to Marcel's existential passion is Hocking's underlying theme that the universal idea of worth is not sufficient to live by. One must be brought into vital connection with the worth of her own existence through her particular experiencing. The individual must demand of the world that it meet her.

In order to live in prophetic spiritual communities, Hocking believes that individuals must be reflexive, retreating from the objective desires of the empirical life into contemplation about the essence of life. In contemplation, the emphasis shifts from the object to the subject who is pursuing the object. Self-consciousness is awakened. In this recollection, the deeper meaning and purpose of one's existence is insighted along with an understanding of one's connection and purpose to the broader world of which one is a part.

It is in believing that the meaning of our lives can be brought into consciousness and then into valid expression in the world that our lives become purposeful. This self possibility, that our lives will have purpose, gives to our existence historic relevance. Through the alternation between reflection on the timeless, eternal values of life (on love, faith, hope, compassion) and then a reflection on how experience of these eternal truths is related to temporal experience, the mystic becomes prophet, and the everyday is rendered with sacred meaning.

Foundations of Embodied Consciousness

Gabriel Marcel agrees with Hocking as well as with Royce that the meaning of human existence can not be separated from the presence of God in human experience or from at the very least some ultimate essence. What Marcel disagrees with is their minimization of the complex and important nature of being embodied human. In that Royce focuses primarily on the idea of God, the deficiency Marcel discovers in Royce's work is that it tends too much towards multi-theoretical abstraction. Hocking focuses primarily on the descriptive process of experiencing God. His work for Marcel moves closer than Royce's work to addressing the particularity of being a human individual. Yet, one senses that Marcel demands more concreteness than even Hocking's work suggests.

Hocking emphasizes the ontological importance of spiritual meaning and that a person must have faith in meaning to feel and exist in meaning. It is possible to imagine Marcel saying yes to this and yet cautioning that even emphasizing the process of feeling as Hocking does may still lead to abstract theorizing about feeling. A person may language the importance of feeling purpose, meaning, beliefs, and still not in actuality experience her feelings. The work of Hocking seems to have become for Marcel a foundation from which to delve even more tangibly into human meaning as it is lived through experience. What is this more thorough, concrete realm that Marcel wishes to study philosophically?

As mentioned, Marcel holds profound respect for Hocking's work. Likewise, Hocking recognizes and respects Marcel's commitment to the experiencing of being human as it is interpreted by each individual. Hocking, when commenting on Marcel's philosophical position, stresses the self as Marcel's "native terrain." Being, in the philosophy of Marcel, becomes an experiential perception. Hocking says about Marcel, "Ask Marcel how being is to be defined, and you get no answer. Ask how it is to be described, and you do a bit better. Ask how it is to be experienced, and Marcel becomes eloquent" (cited in Lechner, 1974, p. 461).

Understanding the meaning of the word experience as Marcel intends it is essential to grasping his philosophical commitments. Hocking indicates that the experience of being in Marcel's terms "is not a datum-pressure or a factual dull thud but a passionate-filled presence. It is a hearth-fire, and at the same time part of the experience is that it is not just a local blaze. It is in everyone" (cited in Lechner, 1974, p. 461).

A passionate-filled presence...is the experience of being . . . present in everyone. The critical word is presence. Before individuals can be receptive to the knowing of the spiritual realm of which Hocking and Royce write, Marcel believes that they must be rooted in the body and the world. This location, rootedness, he calls presence. This presence is rooted in the body and in the spirit. For Royce, the promise of human life is in the eternal. For Marcel, the promise of the essence of meaning is found through the presence

of the body in relationship to the eternal Royce emphasizes. The transcendent eternal (the mental idea) is only relevant to human life if it is embodied in the physical emotional reality of the individual, that is in the hope, love, and fidelity that is being experienced in concrete life.

Marcel holds that experience is not authentic unless it includes both the physical (embodiment) and the spiritual (transcendent) dimension of human existence and essence. Experience considered solely in terms of the physical is meaningless; experience considered solely spiritually is an abstraction of human life.

Marcel throughout his work objects to highly organized thought systems because he perceives systematized thought to conclude in some absolute ideal or vision about the goals of human life. In the process of these conclusive ideals, the reality and destiny of the concrete individual life is discounted. Idealistic truths and those of scientific empiricism may take us to certain understandings that may intellectually, spiritually, physically enhance or deplete our lives. However the dimension of our lives where we cry, bleed, think about complexities and make love can not be summed up by a philosophical system cognitively organized and explained as it is in idealism and scientific empiricism.

Given his objection to systematic thought, it is interesting to note that early in Marcel's life, he was attracted to thinking of human life in terms of these abstract ideals. He explains this, in his autobiographical notes, as a

consequence of his formative years. Marcel was an only child. His mother died when he was quite young, leaving her sister to raise him. The strict moral scruples of his aunt according to Marcel and his father's position as a committed governmental official shaped his view of the world as hygienic, a context in which germs and dirt were suspect. He sought as a result to turn away from the concrete inward visceral nature of experience and rather preferred to immerse his consciousness in "clean" organized systems of predictable thought.

Marcel was intellectually committed to abstract idealism up until World War I. Though abstract thinking had until this time provided for him a shelter from the "wounding contacts of everyday life" (Marcel, 1956a, p. 104), abstraction never actually was for Marcel an acceptable view. The works of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and William James (1842-1910) became instrumental during the time of the first World War along with the works of Hocking and Royce in guiding Marcel toward a philosophy that spoke to his interest in concrete life and the process of living it.

Marcel actually studied under Bergson at the Collège de France. Marcel expressed to Paul Ricoeur, once Marcel's student, in conversations with Ricoeur thirty years after teaching him, that he will never recall without emotion the experience of studying with Bergson. About going to Bergson's classes, Marcel said:

> Every time one went there, it was somehow with a beating heart and with a kind of hope of hearing a revelation . . . Yes, the feeling really was that Bergson was in the process of discovering something, that he was in the process of revealing to us certain deeper and more secret aspects of our own reality. (Marcel, 1973, p. 219)

Key concepts that Bergson focused on that interested Marcel were intuition and duration. Intuition for Bergson is a process of direct knowing that may occur when someone is met by the immediacy of life as in experiences of immense joy, sadness, or commiseration, and thus has no time for immersion in conceptual thought. In such instances and for a brief time, individuals, according to Bergson, know their inwardness and that of others in a much more intimate manner than a person studying human experience and relationship may know (Bergson, 1906/1984).

Intuition is a combination of instinct, which grasps and reacts to the fluid nature of life, and of intelligence, which constructs truths. In that intuition is a <u>combination</u> of these processes, it transcends both separate processes. It is not the reactiveness of instinct nor the conceptualizing of the intellect, yet is a process that uniquely combines them in a unique force of life which Bergson calls not only intuition but élan vital. Because individuals are a manifestation of this force, Bergson says that it is impossible for individuals to study it as if it is separate and apart.

Duration, or attention to existence in time, is the other Bergsonian theme that was important to Marcel. Bergson believes that the attempt to

understand the self by analyzing it in terms of static concepts betrays the dynamic, changing character of the self. The individual is not predetermined by life processes rather is free to create the future out of what she has experienced and learned from the past. This free action is based on the wisdom of the inner life, acquired through experiences, rather than on the imposition of intellectual concepts. Marcel was a passionate student of this aspect of Bergson's work that addressed some of the complexities of living in time.

William James, similar to Bergson, believes human life unfolds in ways that are determined by visceral immediate experiencing rather than intellectual constructs. James does not favor knowledge for knowledge's sake. Knowledge, he holds, must offer some relevant meaning to individual's lived experiences. In The varieties of religious experience (1901/1961) James writes:

> If we look on man's whole mental life as it exists . . . we have to confess that the part of it of which rationalism can give an account is relatively superficial. It is the part that has the prestige undoubtedly, for it has the loquacity, it can challenge you for proofs, and chop logic, and put you down with words. But it will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions. If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhibits. Your whole subconscious life, your impulses, your faiths, your needs, your divinations, have prepared the premises, of which your consciousness now feels the weight of the result; and something in you absolutely knows that that result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it. (p. 74)

The philosophy of James places a priority on experience and feeling as opposed to rational constructions. James believes that rational constructs are convincing for individuals only when their prior inarticulated feelings about reality agree with the articulated rational ideas presented. Experience and feeling are necessarily prior to concepts and beliefs.

The philosophy of James does not end here in an "if it feels good, it is good relativism" but rather views the ultimate measure of the truth of an experience to be its empirical result. What effect does it produce in the lives of those experiencing the experience or those affected by it? Foundational values about what is desirable and just in terms of the outcome of experience determine the truth of the experience.

Finally, James like Bergson, believes in the evolution of knowledge and "truth" as it evolves through experiencing rather than knowledge that is static and preset. Because experience is constantly evolving, no point of view can ever be the last one. Truth is living, not dead. Marcel deeply appreciated this vital aspect of the philosophy of James. Marcel said about James "that he appears to have felt in the highest degree the need . . . to struggle relentlessly against the peril to which all thought is exposed: that of becoming rancid, like butter, or overripe, like fruit" (Marcel, 1963, p. 2). James, like his student Hocking and like Bergson, was committed to the notion that individual lives unfold not in terms of preordained truths but in terms of the free will and essential spiritual passion within the individual.

James, Bergson, Hocking, and Royce all stimulated and reinforced in Marcel questions about meaning. By 1920, he had joined these thinkers who believed that "the fundamental feature of conscious existence is its trafficking in meanings" (Cooper, 1990, p. 52). After all, Marcel comes to realize that when it is all said and done the meaning of the reality and destiny of the concrete life is what is important, not the explanations or ideals founded in abstract truths.

Experiencing not in the positivistic sense but rather within contexts in which existential moments are unfolding are contexts of meaning. Contextually this experiencing is simultaneously spiritual, physical, and concrete. Marcel raises this question:

> Was there not an arduous way which might give access to a higher empiricism and to the satisfaction of that need of the individual and concrete which I felt in myself? In other words, would not experience be for me not so much a springboard as a promised land? (Marcel, 1956a, pp. 105-106)

It would appear that Marcel refers to empiricism as higher because he is describing experience that both involves the incarnate embodied concrete experience and the transcendent, spiritual domain. How does this come to be experienced?

What is illuminated here is the idea that rootedness in the body does not have to do with simply experiencing sensations. It is the meaning of the sensations that is relevant and this Marcel believes, the meaning, refers to the

deeper more ontological considerations of what it is to be human. In other words, being embodied in Marcelian terms not only roots a person in the body and world but also opens a person up to transcendent understandings. In the higher empiricism of embodiment and transcendence, or existence and being, the sense-datum of experience is relevant only when it is referred to some deeper ontological understanding of what it is to-be.

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF CREATIVE FIDELITY

CHAPTER II

THE MEANING OF CREATIVE FIDELITY

> **On the threshold of the catacombs which may soon swallow us up, it should be remembered that it is basically the same power of creative fidelity concentrated in more favorable times in architecture, music and poetry, which tomorrow will strengthen the fierce resolution of those who reject the consummation of themselves or others of man's denial of man, or to formulate this in a more profound way, the denial of the more than human by the less than human. (Marcel, 1964, p. 10)**

Originally written by Marcel during the rise of Hitler and the Nazi subjugation of Europe, Marcel names creative fidelity as a way of being that rejects the denial and consummation of humanity. Marcel believes that there is a particular way of thinking and acting in the modern age that denies the spiritual and humane dimensions of human experience and thus diminishes humankind. Our fascination and compulsion, according to Marcel, with the objectification and abstraction of human life (philosophical thought that ignores actual existential issues, and technology that decimates) has to do with our desire to avoid personal and emotional encounters with our immediate worlds. When experience is objectified, individuals are uprooted from their primordial participation in the world as well as numbed to the transcendent, closing themselves from participation in meaning, wonder, and justice.

One of the reasons that Marcel believes that human beings find themselves in what he calls a broken world, the title of a play he wrote in 1932, is that they have lost their ontological moorings. In the play the protagonist Christiane says to her friend Denise:

> Don't you feel sometimes that we are living . . . if you can call it living . . . in a broken world? Yes, broken like a broken watch. The mainspring has stopped working. Just look at it, nothing has changed. Everything is in place. But put the watch to your ear, and you don't hear any ticking. You know what I'm talking about, the world, what we call the world, the world of human creatures . . . it seems to me it must have had a heart at one time, but today you would say the heart had stopped beating. (Marcel, 1932, p. 36)

An example of living in this world is the way in which we often perceive sense experience primarily in terms of the sensation itself or thought in terms of abstract concepts themselves without reflecting on the profound ontological meaning. Marcel calls this kind of experiencing first level reflection.

First level reflection is the kind of thinking necessary for solving problems. Information is organized into concepts, classifications, definitions and analyzed for an answer. To reflect in this manner, an individual must set herself apart from the problem that needs attention. In this mood, one is a spectator of life rather than a participant. "This is the world where sense experience is a message to be decoded and where my body is only an

instrument. This is the world of the 'spirit of abstraction' " (cited in Lechner, 1974, p. 462).

How is this spirit of abstraction manifested? In the mental realm there are different systems of thought both academic and non-academic that mimic this abstraction in that the thinking is objectified and impersonal. The knowledge that evolves is that easily memorized and yet not felt. In the realm of matter, technology is the sphere in which the spirit of abstraction is manifested in the material world. The vitality of the plastic arts, music, drama, religion, literature, and philosophy are often deadened when incorporated into a mindset that values technological expertise over the depth of meaning and expression that comes through being immersed in projects of consciousness rather than projects of technological skilled precision. Examples of this are the obscured vitality of music that may occur when music is electronically synthesized (there is not the sense of fingers on piano keys) or the way in which religious thought is profaned through evangelical televised religion.

Through the technological or abstracted life, existence becomes make-believe. Abstraction, whether lived out in the mental and/or the material realm, keeps people from encountering their lived situations.

The actual primary relation a person has with the world, however, is not as a spectator watching or a thinker to an object but rather is as a person

participating. Human beings are not, Marcel says, watching a show. The lived body is not separable even in thought from the lived experience. As Marcel succinctly put it about himself "I am my body" (Marcel, 1965, p. 12).

Marcel calls for a move away from the fragmented, empty world of objectification and abstraction toward a fuller, personal, and meaningful experience of being in the world. Before seeking to understand what Marcel means by being in the world in personal and meaningful ways, it seems appropriate to inquire into why Marcel wishes this for humans. What is the purpose of living in creative fidelity?

The Purpose of Creative Fidelity

Is the purpose of meaningful life, according to Marcel, for God and/or each other or to some other end? Marcel believes that human experience is for God and for each other simultaneously. To be for God is to be for one another and vice versa.

For what purpose? Is this purpose salvation in heaven or social justice on earth? In that Marcel focused on the body as central to philosophical understanding, Marcel is a philosopher concerned with earthly life. Ricouer actually attributes the idea of the body as philosophically significant to the work of Marcel.

In his attention to the body, Ricouer points out that Marcel laid the foundation for what Merleau-Ponty and others would later call

phenomenology of perception which liberated epistemology and ontology from the bonds of classical *a priori* principles. When philosophical inquiry includes the body, the philosophy of experience becomes based on the concreteness of daily life. In a conversation Ricouer has with Marcel, Ricouer says:

> You are the one who has brought back to the level of feeling itself this 'absolute presence.' You have taken the body, rather than language, as the primary focus on existence. Perhaps we should not forget this today when French philosophy is suffering from a kind of fascination with the problems of language. In joining a criticism of sensation as message to your criticism of the body as instrument, you opened the way to a philosophy of the body-subject, and gave philosophy the means for thinking embodiment. (Marcel, 1973, p. 222)

Marcel objects to definitions of experience that take sensation to be a message passed from a transmitter to a receiver, a something sent and that something received.

"The traditional empiricism Marcel rejects is especially that of Locke and Hume, in which the primary meaning of experience, the foundation of all knowing, is individual sense data" (Marcel, 1973, p. xxi). This position creates a model of understanding that makes human life into an objectifiable, mechanized entity.

Marcel agrees with the traditional empiricists that sensation is foundational to experience and yet his definition of sensation differs from that of the empiricists. Marcel's understanding of sensation is based on his

idea that experience is an act of participation between a human and her world. She is not acted on in a way that can be standardized and defined prior to the experience but is always herself making meaning out of the sensational impact of the experience. She senses the world, yes, yet not only by way of the physiobiological but also in terms of feeling, imagining, and thinking, all processes through which meaning is made.

> In the 'experiential thinking' Marcel advocates and represents, the most intense effort of attention must be directed to experience, but certainly this effort must not be squandered on what he would regard as the highly special, largely automatic, noetically neutral, and personally indifferent form of experience represented in pure sense data. The philosophically important sense of experience is that in which it is taken as a global encounter with situations in which one is personally involved (emphasis added) and in which one's destiny is somehow at stake, an encounter which itself founds meaning, and which requires a special ability and effort to engage in fully. (Marcel, 1973, p. xxi)

Marcel is committed to describing sensation in terms of feeling, meaning, and personal participation rather than in terms of defining sensation prior to the actual experience, as the idealists seem to do, and rather than thinking that sensation can be observed as tangible data, as the empiricists conclude. Both of these latter ways of defining sensation negate the importance of the felt-body and therefore negate existential meaning that can only evolve out of the person feeling her experience.

If the destined purpose according to Marcel of creative fidelity is salvation in heaven with God, Marcel would be a Christian transcendental philosopher. The body would seemingly be de-emphasized and denigrated by Marcel as it was in the Gospels. Experience would be relevant only in terms of heaven. The emphasis would be on professed belief (faith) rather than on action. Drink the wine, eat the bread, profess being a follower of Jesus as Messiah (Christ) and you shall live in eternal bliss. De-emphasized would be the human struggle on earth. The complexities that arise between humans seeking social justice would be ignored in the name of heavenly salvation.

In that Marcel emphasized consistently his commitment to concrete human experience as it is lived out in relationship, in that Marcel emphasized embodiment, freedom, love, clearly Marcel intends the purpose of creative fidelity for life on earth. What remains perplexing; however, has to do with Marcel's conversion to Catholicism in 1929.

Marcel's commitment is to concrete daily life and to intersubjective relationship understood in terms of freedom, responsibility and compassion. It is through receptivity and availability to one another in relationships of justice that Marcel believes human life is lived in full and humane ways. Christianity, however, that is New Testament Christianity, emphasizes individual salvation for the purpose of life after death rather than fraternal communion during earthly life.

Commitment to concrete life is present in all of Marcel's works before and after his conversion to Catholicism. Marcel was raised without religion and yet even as a young child, he had inclinations towards spiritual insight. Early on, for example, Marcel is aware that the presence of an other is sometimes felt when the other is not physically present. He feels the spirit of his deceased mother throughout his life.

Because Marcel was always aware of the sacred dimension of human experience, it is curious that he does not remain a spiritual humanist. Why does he convert to Christianity? Marcel does not offer an answer to this question. He says that it is difficult to say exactly how his Christian faith fits into his thinking (Schilpp & Hahn, 1984, p. 200). What Marcel does say is that at some time in his philosophical thinking, he began to be drawn to Christianity because of the profound reality he believed to be foundational to this faith. Apparently his conversion to Catholicism has to do with his perception that it is the fullest form of Christianity (Marcel, 1973).

That Marcel speaks of a profound reality in Christianity still does not satisfactorily answer the question about why his conversion because Marcel seems to have <u>always</u> believed in a profound reality underlying human existence. Perhaps Marcel's conversion has something to do with Jesus becoming a symbol for Marcel of an incarnated embodied being bridging the phenomenal experiential world to the spiritual transcendent world. Marcel

in his search to understand human existence is always seeking ways to bridge existential and spiritual dimensions of human experience. In this sense perhaps the incarnated earthy Jesus appeals to Marcel.

And yet this explanation still begets confusion. Jesus of the Gospels ignores the existential incarnated dimension of human experience and instead preaches for the purpose of salvation after life. Jesus of the Gospels is not a loving man trusting in the compassion and love of fellow human beings. What is important to this Jesus is that people believe in him as the son of God and follow his teachings. Typical of Jesus' message found throughout the Gospels is in John (Chapter 3):

> For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth in him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (3: 16-18)

Compassion for unbelievers is condemned and proscribed. Whoever believes will be saved. Whoever does not believe will be damned, no matter how moral a life. Morality and humanity are not considered. What is emphasized is a "Manichaean" world view in which Christians are of God, good, and saved, and non-Christians damned (Kaufmann, 1976).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus instructs, "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew, 7: 1). And yet, in some sense the entire sermon is a judgment against those who do not follow "the way." Jesus ends the sermon by saying that those who follow his message are wise and will be rewarded in heaven. Those who do not follow him he describes as fools who will be punished. In that Jesus teaches that God will judge and punish, the compassionate message "judge not" is diminished. There is no need for humans to judge one another, for there is a promise that God will take care of that.

Who is the loving existential Jesus to whom Marcel is drawn? In the Gospels, Jesus is more like the grand inquisitor of Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov than the Jesus in Dostoevsky's story who embodies love, freedom, and the hope of grace. To whom is Dostoevsky referring when he creates his Jesus? It is interesting that in the works of people such as Dostoevsky, Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Paul Tillich, Dorothee Soelle, the Jesus foundational to their works is world-focused, courageous, encouraging of freedom, loving. This Jesus is a humanitarian representative of God. He brings God to earthly life rather than takes people away to heaven.

In what source is this Jesus, remembered and revered by many with humanitarian concerns, found? Is this a Jesus of the imagination solely or did he actually exist and the writers of the Scriptures misinterpreted his acts

and intentions? Regardless of the answer, Jesus of love, responsibility, and freedom has existed in the imagination of many throughout the history of Christianity.

In that Marcel's focus is life on earth rather than life after death, the spirit of Jesus foundational to the works of Dostoevsky and others is also foundational to Marcel's work. Jesus as an existentialist rather than as salvational Christ symbolizes the spirit of Marcel's work. Love, freedom, grace, forgiveness, and redemption are all important themes to Marcel. He is interested in the earthly undertones of these themes. To be religious without taking into consideration existential earthly concerns raises the same objections for Marcel that idealism raises in its evasion of existential actualities.

Marcel's work is not about absolute fidelity, it is creative fidelity. Marcel's references, for example, to redemption are not references to heaven, rather to redemption between individuals in relationship. Further, the few times that Marcel does write of immortality it is not in terms of an afterlife but rather in terms of the spirit of the individual who has died remaining with the loved one living. Love lived out of creative fidelity so deeply touches our lives that the love ultimately becomes immortal spiritual life.

There are a few exceptions, when a different Marcel is expressed, a Marcel who sounds more like a scriptural Christian, but these moments in

his work are rare. An example of such an exception is found in Man Against Mass Society (1952) when Marcel writes about salvation:

> It is only the rainbow of reconciliation that can bring salvation to us - though it may, of course, be salvation elsewhere: salvation far beyond our earthly limits, far beyond the unavoidable yet only apparent bankruptcy of our earthly deaths: in eternity. (p. 192)

Because this "voice" of Marcel's is rare, it is not exhibitive of the foundations of creative fidelity.

In the bulk of Marcel's work he emphasizes that "we must not get lost in abstractions. There is no hiding-place up there, warns Marcel, echoing Gustav Thibon -- the way to heaven is to dig down deep where you are" (Cain, 1963, p. 81). "To dig down deep where you are" is the ethical foundation of creative fidelity. The actuality of what human beings experience is what is sacred to Marcel.

To set ideals up for human existence that are impossible to fulfill (ideals that will be met in heaven rather than on earth) diminishes the majesty of being human and sets up at best irrelevant and at worst unjust expectations, according to Marcel. If the purpose of human life is for an ideal unattainable, then the experience of being human becomes one of shame, frustration, repression, and denial. For example, if the purpose of life is to transcend emotional and physical desires, then the purpose has to do with something

other than being human. Human beings desire. To make purpose transcendent of this actuality encourages self-deceit and constant frustration.

To study Marcel is to come to a different understanding of spiritual purpose than purpose that denies human experiential existence. For Marcel spiritual purpose, if it is spiritual at all, must be in accord with human life rather than antagonist towards human experiencing. To Marcel human life is sanctified. He commented once that the study of sanctity would make a good introduction to the study of being (Marcel, 1955).

To think of life as sanctified as Marcel does is not to romanticize human life but rather to honor it. That life is honorable is fundamental to existential phenomenology. The meaning of life comes not from manipulating experience and wishing human complexities away but from embracing life as it is experienced. Further, justice does not evolve out of pretending that human beings are who they are not. Proposed as just ways of being together are in fact just only if they are phenomenological, that is, related to how it is that humans experience. The making of justice begins and ends with felt-experience.

To throw the actuality of human life away in the name of abstract philosophical and religious ideals is deplorable to Marcel. His entire life's work is committed to opposing this spirit of abstraction found in religious

and philosophical idealism and positivism, seeking justice through relationships of creative fidelity (Marcel, 1956a).

The Role of Receptivity in Just Relationship

It is necessary to explore Marcel's meanings of creative fidelity in order to more fully comprehend the texture of just relationship. Fundamental to this understanding is Marcel's concept of **receptivity** also referred to as **disposability** and **spiritual availability** in his works. It is considered by some to be Marcel's major contribution to the philosophy of ethics, a concept largely ignored by previous philosophers.

> The concept of availability played no previous role in the history of philosophy. Until Marcel designated it as a special quality, a peculiar human virtue, nothing like availability had ever been included among the various human virtues in the whole history of ethics. To this extent it constitutes a genuine discovery by Marcel, who was the first to recognize the fundamental significance of the concept and to elaborate on it. (Bollnow, 1969, p. 182)

Marcel defines human life as being-in-the-world. To arrive at existentially relevant epistemological understandings, ontological insights, and ethical soundness, the relationship between being and world must be at the forefront of thought. The emphasis on relationship assumes that there is receptivity between the person and her context.

Distorted incorrect ways of knowing, being, and acting are guaranteed, according to Marcel, when thinking considers being as set off from the world

and thus unaffected, closed-off to the momentary experiences of being in the world. First level reflection, as mentioned, is the thought that separates being from world. The world is represented in thought as a reality from which individuals must detach themselves in order to grasp reality in a patterned reliable form, and then through the will, to shape it into a complete possession.

Marcel concedes that it is appropriate in light of certain intentions to think in terms of the world as object set apart from subject. For example, when scientists attempt to find cures for certain diseases, it is appropriate through first level reflection to isolate abnormal cells from the body and study them in a laboratory. And yet it is not possible to come to understanding about existential being through this same kind of isolationist thinking.

To come to existential insight requires a different kind of consciousness, one that Marcel called second level reflection. Rather than analyzing parts, this way of thinking synthesizes the different ongoing moments of interactive experience a human being encounters. It is understood, phenomenologically, that in the actuality of experience, separation between a human being and the world she is participating in does not exist. The process of second level reflection is an attempt to find descriptive language for the felt-meaning of the experiencing.

Participation is not objectifiable rather is experienced as "immediate certainty in the feeling of one's body" in relationship to the world. When one participates in experience, subject/object poles are transcended, for at the same time that it is one's body experiencing, in this participation one's body is also permeated by the presence of the world, of the other. This mysterious relationship between the internal and the external is beyond the scope of psychology. This relationship is a "fact of feeling" rather than a fact of theory (Prini, 1969).

As an aside, it is interesting to consider that quantum physicists (Briggs & Peat, 1984) today would refute first level reflection as effective even for the study of disease. Quantum physicists have been in the process over the last ten years of radically transforming scientific comprehension through their findings that affirm the interrelationship and inseparableness of all life forms. To study forms isolated from one another may be interesting but leads, according to this new physics, to gross misunderstandings.

The work of quantum physicists was begun during the lifetime of Marcel and yet some of the more complete understandings have evolved since his death in 1973. That science is affirming what Marcel took to be true philosophically in terms of receptivity makes Marcel a prophetic philosophical companion to such physicists as David Bohm, Ilya Prigogine, and Rupert Sheldrake.

Receptivity is seminal to any understanding that describes reality as relational. It is important to understand that the underlying meaning of receptivity for Marcel is different from what happens to wax when it "receives" the imprint of a seal. The receptivity Marcel refers to has to do with giving, with self-giving, as when a host "receives" friends. "This kind of 'reception' is entirely different from that of a vessel which is filled with an alien substance; it is a participation in a reality, in a plenitude, and a communication of oneself" (Marcel, 1956a, p. 99).

Relationship between God and human, human and human, beings and their situation, reality, never can be strictly defined because of their evolutionary qualities. Marcel describes second level reflection as a process that attempts to grasp relational receptivity by synthesizing what it is that is felt in the midst of the happening. Perhaps inappropriate in this philosophical context, and yet, inspiring a felt-meaning, of the spirit of receptivity as found in Marcel's works is the following poetic work from Irish fairy stories by James Stephens (1988):

> The Finest Music
>
> Once, as they rested on a chase, a debate arose among the Fianna-Finn as to what was the finest music in the world.
>
> "Tell us that," said Fionn, turning to Oisin.
>
> "The cuckoo calling from the tree that is highest

in the hedge," cried his merry son.

"A good sound," said Fionn. "And you, Oscar," he asked, "what is to your mind the finest of music?"

"The top of music is the ring of a spear on a shield," cried the stout lad.

"It is a good sound," said Fionn.

And the other champions told their delight:
the belling of a stag across water, the baying
of a tuneful pack heard in the distance, the song
of a lark, the laughter of a gleeful girl, or the
whisper of a moved one.

"They are good sounds all," said Fionn.

"Tell us, chief," one ventured, "what do you think?"

"The music of what happens," said great Fionn,
"that is the finest music in the world."

(quoted in Janeczko, 1988, p. ix)

The music of what happens . . . when I drink my orange juice this morning, when I tell you this afternoon that I have never loved you as much as I do now, when tomorrow morning I tell you that I do not like you at all. The music of what happens . . . five planes shot down over Iraq, 3,000 bodies burned today at the camp, babies dying of starvation in Somalia. If Marcel were to interpret Stephens' poem for meaning, would he agree that all of the above moments are "the music of what happens?"

The "music of what happens" for Marcel would inevitably have to do with being human. Being in the Marcelian sense has to do with receptivity to the sacred and existential dimensions of human experience. In that the first example has to do with sustenance, it has to do with being; in that the second with love, it is of being; that the third honestly embraces the flux of existential feeling, it has to do with being. The "music of what happens" for Marcel would never be a pretense of nor a denial or degradation of being. In that the latter three examples, Iraq, concentration camps, and children starving, are due to the degradation of human life and human values, they would not be considered by Marcel as the music of what happens but rather the silencing of this music.

Relationships of justice are contexts of creativity where being is received and where the degradation of being is disallowed. Relationship founded on existential principles is described as creative because the form of the relationship is constantly unfolding based on who one another are in any given moment and on what is happening between. When relationship is creative, both persons are expressing their lives to one another continuously. The individuals are enriched or damaged or changed or sustained by one another at the same time that the relationship is deepening or becoming diminished or becoming more textured. The outcome of experiencing

relationship is never predictable when it is founded on the experience of being meeting being (Marcel, 1964).

Courage, Freedom, and Truth in Creative Fidelity

Receptivity is important because it encourages being. This encouragement leads to experiences of feelings, of vulnerability, of the possibility that one will be influenced by others. When being is encouraged, experience is not limited by fear. When experience is lived courageously rather than hindered by fear, human life becomes a complex of difficult choices. When a person makes herself receptive to experience with an other, she takes phenomenal risk that she will be hurt or existentially transformed and yet she also makes it a possibility that she will be known by others, loved profoundly, and educated.

To take this risk in accord with creative fidelity requires courage. This courage is fortified by the belief that human life is sacred and in that sense that it is important to be fully engaged in life. Meaning is not created out of making money, holding certain positions of status, or owning material objects rather is created out of relationships of courage, honesty, and care.

This courage to receive and be in life as a participating presence is at the crux of creative fidelity. Implied in this courage of participation is the courage to embrace change. Change is inevitable if one is participating in ongoing experiencing, for experiencing deeply instructs in ways that challenge existing

assumptions. Nietzsche captures the spirit of this courage -- "the courage" not "of one's convictions . . . but for an attack upon one's convictions" (cited in Davis, 1989, p. 339).

This courage comes from a certain hope, an absolute confidence Marcel had, that life is created for the purpose of spiritual and aesthetic meaning. In order for each person to understand what this hope holds for her, she must trust life enough to enter into a constant dialogue with others and with God, continuously seeking understanding about her particular being in the context of her particular world.

Hope for Marcel is not deterministic. It is not a hope that everything will turn out in a discernible way, rather it is a trust that there is an ontological basis to being that can not be grasped as long as our consciousness is limited by cause-effect thinking or abstract rationalizations and/or consumed with the world of objects. Hope draws its strength from love.

> The capacity to hope diminishes in proportion as the soul becomes increasingly chained to the categories of its experience, and as it is given over more completely and more desperately to the world of the problematical. . . . In contrast to the captive soul, the soul which is at the disposal of others is consecrated and inwardly dedicated; it is protected against suicide and despair, which are interrelated and alike, because it knows that it is not its own, and the most legitimate use it can make of its freedom is precisely to recognize that it does not belong to itself; this recognition is the starting point of its activity and creativeness. (Marcel, 1956a, p. 43)

The more non-receptive a person is, the less capacity in her for hope.

In hope lies a refusal to predict the future, a refusal to hold fast to certainties, and a commitment to be receptive to the evolving of life in one another. It is beyond both fear and desire and is a leap into the transcendent dimension of love, a dimension where love does not cling nor demand nor resist but simply endures.

"I hope in you for us" is a poetic expression of Marcel's, expressing his belief that the freedom to be is dependent on relationships of receptive justice. Justice is the form in which the human being actualizes itself. Marcel believes that the solidarity of all humans is ineradicable and that the spiritual destinies of humans is intertwined, one with the other. Without hope in one another, life is primarily logistical drudgery and void of the possibility of existential meaning.

Without receptivity between persons, they are no different than actors on a stage, playing roles that are pre-scripted. Predictable are the limitations and boundaries of their pretense of love and relationship. Marcel portrays this pretense between his different characters in plays such as The Broken World (1932), The Rebellious Heart (1918), and A Man of God (1925). They hear their spoken lines but the words are those of strangers speaking past each other. Hidden and locked away for the duration of this staged event are their loves, their souls. It is this Marcel calls the sin against life. This way of non-being masquerades as being and creates interminable pain between and

within human beings. Oftentimes, there is confused internal emotion following these hollow attempts at meeting. Martin Buber in his I and Thou writes that all real living is meeting. Without receptivity, there can be nothing real happening, nothing, that is, that has to do with the particularness of real human experience.

One of the reasons that Marcel writes plays is to confront the audience with the vapidity of contemporary life. Too often human beings are blind to knowing themselves concretely. Philosophical language can attempt to describe existential emptiness and yet the only way to actually portray the voids and deceits of human experience is to let human lives speak, in the literal sense, for themselves. Drama is a context in which the life itself speaks. Marcel's characters are not fantastical but are persons in everyday dilemmas of confusion and difficulty, at times opening themselves to moments of grace and depth of understanding.

Marcel's intent was that the characters, being immersed in ordinary and yet profound kinds of struggles, would reflect to the persons of the audience aspects of their own lives, aspects about which they were previously oblivious. His plays are an attempt to say "this is your life/ what are you going to do about it?" It was a major disappointment to Marcel that his plays were not more widely received. It had been his hope that his plays would contribute to some sort of existential awakening in which human beings

would contact their own secret agonies as well as their buried hopes. When human beings hide from their suffering, they also close themselves off to the grace of and faith in spiritual insight and wisdom.

Marcel's plays are reflectors, brilliant and piercing, of the harsh reality of evasion of spiritual justice and aesthetic meaning in contemporary life. In this sense his plays are not of the escape-into-entertainment form, rather, quite to the contrary, are avenues into the interiority of the human soul. In that being ourselves has to do with knowing ourselves soulfully and vice versa, time put aside for delving into Marcel's plays is qualitatively meaningful for the existential spirit.

"We all face the alternative of either being what we really are or of getting lost in the web of our own fictions and misunderstandings with others" (Prini, 1969, p. 216). The freedom to be, according to Marcel, is not whimsy. To know one's being requires contemplation, silence, love, and attention to the sacred dimension. These qualities in their sum equal courage.

Ordinarily the concept of freedom conjures up on the one hand, fear of anarchy, and on the other hand, notions of a kind of spiritedness where the lines of individual freedom are blurred and all of experience is trivialized. In both of these instances, freedom is solely individualized, unattended by the solemn responsibilities of relationship. Marcel's definitions of freedom fall

on neither side of these extremes. His inquiries into freedom are about human complexities, possibilities, and above all responsibilities to one another.

For Marcel, freedom is related to truth, but not to truth as a simple choice. He gives the example from his own life of calling a publisher to withdraw a text he had submitted because he come to realize that publishing it would harm a certain person. This is a response for him in accord with all that he believes and takes himself to be. Any other response would have been a betrayal of himself and freedom is never authentic if it takes an individual to self-betrayal.

Marcel defines the truth underlying freedom in terms both universal and personal. Universal truth is truth that is unalterable. It is held to be unconditional by a single person and does not change through experience. In his own life, Marcel gives examples of two of his universal truths -- that racism is wrong and that religious intolerance is wrong. To be free means to uphold these truths in all situations and to fight vehemently against any situation that subtly or explicitly reinforces racism or religious intolerance.

Marcel indicates that either a person is born knowing universal truth, or learns it through relationships with persons in her life, or through the grace of spiritual insight. Once universal truth is held, it is not modifiable. This is complex to consider because if one learns a universal truth through

relationship or through spiritual grace, then in fact the truth is arrived at through experiencing. How does one know that there will not be an experience that occurs in the future to alter the present particular commitment to the truth?

Marcel's response to this question is that though a person may come to truth through experience that enlightens her to what she was before ignorant about, once she knows the universal truth, she knows it interminably. Universal truth is not alterable because it is based on values that are not alterable. It will always be true, according to Marcel, that human life is sacred. Therefore, it is always truth that every human being is to be treated with dignity and respect. Because universal truth may never be based on a value that degrades and dehumanizes, words spoken as if universally true and yet which lead to the "desacralization" of life are not truths but rather are evils deceptively masquerading as truth. For example, while a Ku Klux Klan member may preach her truth as if it is carved in stone, absolute, unmodifiable, her professed truth is the opposite of what Marcel means by truth.

Personal truth for Marcel includes universal truths that are stable because these truths are based on unalterable values; they also include individual existential truths based on values altered through experiencing. For example, a person may believe in a certain kind of religious piety as the

pastor Claude Lemoyne does in Marcel's play A Man of God (1925/1965a) and then through personal experience come to the realization that his pious life is more reflective of his desire to escape his human situation rather than to be a man of commitment. When Claude realizes this, he says:

> You live for years with a certain idea of yourself, and you think you are drawing strength from that idea. Then suddenly you realize you're living in a fool's paradise. . . . When I look into the past, the things I used to say and think have become meaningless. . . . I ought to recognize them as mine and feel at home with them. But I don't. I can make nothing of them. (p. 81)
>
> I haven't even the courage to read in my own heart. (p. 82)
>
> I'm spiritually bankrupt. I've been living on assets that didn't belong to me. (p. 96)
>
> I ought first to have led a man's life. (p. 97)

Claude is a pastor, a man of God, and yet he is living by "ideals" that keep him less than emotionally and meaningfully involved in his own life. His relationship with his wife has been decaying over the years and yet problems have been denied. When she begins to address the problems with him, his life of meaninglessness comes into focus.

What Claude's wife wanted in him was a man who felt, who believed based on his daily experience, who struggled with complex questions of belief and commitment. What she experienced in him was a man who followed

certain universal truths assigned to the pious man and yet they were truths that were not his. About his love for her, she accuses him:

> There was a certain reserve of force in you and you spent it on me as you would have spent it on a woman of the streets. But that wasn't love, you know very well, any more than your love for my soul was. The woman in me you never even suspected of being there, and certainly didn't satisfy. (Marcel, 1925/1965a, p. 85)

Claude was a man not of freedom but a man constrained by obligation.

It is when Claude begins to address the hollowness of his life that his piety is thrown into question. Ironically, it is when he understands how he has avoided freedom through masquerading as "a man of God" that he lives closer towards being such a man of God. It is only when he starts questioning his commitments to piety that he makes possible a life of creative fidelity. Personal truth becomes the sphere in which Claude is free to question his values, to self inquire and begin to live his existential questions.

Whether the truth is universal and unchanging or personal and alterable, freedom is a person's living response to truth in that moment, in that context. Without the freedom to question, to discover, and to commit to what a person values, her integrity is at stake. In Tragic Wisdom and Beyond (1973), Marcel writes:

> To persist in killing the sense of truth in a man is to attack directly his respect for himself. A morally healthy person is horrified by lying because he regards it as a defilement. Even if I know my lie will not be

> found out, I refuse to lie because I care about preserving my inner integrity. (p. 83)

This truth of which Marcel writes is truth that both affects and is affected by the concrete living reality of a person's existence. A life of un-freedom necessarily is a denial of the existential truth of one's experiencing. Marcel defines freedom in terms of negation as "the absence of any form of self alienation" and in terms positive as "I act freely if the motives of my act are in line with what I can legitimately regard as the structural features of my personality" (Marcel, 1973, p. 86).

Two major forces in contemporary life that Marcel believes threaten truth are the spirit of abstraction that encourages systematic theoretical thinking detached from concrete experience and techniques of degradation that technological development has made possible, techniques that objectify and thus dehumanize the experience of being human. Marcel makes the point that since Nietzsche, the reality of inwardness has been thrown into doubt. It has become more and more doubtful that any individual can identify a certain core or essential self. With the fragmentation of the self, an indirect invitation is extended to every form of mental and technological intrusion by society (Marcel, 1973).

In both systematic thought and dehumanizing experience, the person finds herself discouraged and in some instances numbed to her own

perception, insight, and wisdom. In a sense, her attention is stolen from the task of making meaning and making justice and is given over to the activity of being a functionary in some smooth-running system, be it academic, social, or economic. Instead of giving of her life, she is given a role, a function to perform.

To resist this degradation of existence, being is in truth, according to Marcel, when an individual has the courage to attend lucidly to any given situation. If in actuality, the situation is dehumanizing, the free response is to act in ways that create a more humane situation. A person is free only to the extent that she allows herself to become involved and engaged in a confrontation and struggle against a situation that demeans, alienates, and objectifies human life. And yet Marcel does not wish to simplify the courageous act towards freedom.

Always Marcel is intent on highlighting the limitations that beset human life that make clear-cut and just responses not easily obtainable. For example, he writes of a family man who is a worker in a totalitarian system who is degraded by the job and whose work it is to dehumanize others. He is fundamentally opposed to the tasks set before him and yet is committed to supporting his family.

The way this basic man resolves the dilemma to preserve his integrity is to keep his job and yet act in ways that show respect for the lives he contacts.

When he is asked to torture, he comforts. When he is asked to imprison, he frees. In the exercise of this freedom, there is enormous strain and risk. He cannot justify quitting and not feeding his family and yet he also cannot justify supporting his family at the expense of lives he has destroyed. He is caught in a "labyrinth of justice." Daily he lives with the task of seeking to be responsible with his freedom.

As may be recalled, Marcel learns a great deal from the works of both Royce and Hocking about coming to truth and yet in the final analysis feels that there are aspects of their work still dangerously abstract in terms of truth. If Marcel's philosophical notes and speeches were all that existed, then his ideas would be very close to a combination of the works of Royce and Hocking.

Marcel in other words believes as Royce and Hocking that the following are epistemologically correct in terms of truth: 1) In order to know truth, a human being must first have a faith that there is truth, for faith enables her to be open to insights into truth. 2) The most significant ultimate truth is spiritual and involves humans in their special relationship to God. 3) There must be faith not only that there is truth but that the basis of truth is metaphysical -- ontological and spiritual. 4) Ontological truth can not be separated from the concrete experience of being human with one another. 5) When what is believed to be true manifests in ways experientially that

perpetuate injustice or some form of destructiveness, then the truth becomes recognized as a false truth and is discarded. 6) Redemption has to do with admitting error in assuming truth where there is not truth and taking action to remedy the wrong committed. New truth is sought. (Hocking, 1912; Royce, 1919).

In the above philosophical ideas, Marcel is in agreement with Royce and Hocking. What saves Marcel's work from what he criticizes in theirs, that neither Royce nor Hocking make it clear how human beings struggling with concrete everyday dilemmas actually come to truth as they do not address the complexities that arise when concrete life is actually experienced, is that Marcel presents existential dilemmas through the lives in his plays. Marcel's plays provide a context for Marcel to give breath to life in a way not possible through pure theory.

Marcel's Theater of Interiority

Marcel's plays are vital, alive interactions between ordinary human beings. In the development of his ideas, Marcel is in an inward dialectic that includes the actual lives of the characters in his plays and his philosophical ideas. His ideas are foundational to the lives of the characters and are enriched, altered, or neglected by what develops through the relationships the characters have with one another. His concepts inform his characters, his characters alter his concepts. It is this dialectical dimension to Marcel's work

that makes his work not only committed (fidelitous) to the human struggle but ongoing and therefore dynamic (creative) in terms of the struggle. One can imagine that Marcel both creates and is created by his characters.

Unlike Royce and Hocking, Marcel does not only emphasize philosophically the importance of praxis (that the relationship between theory and practice is fundamental to living truth), he also shows praxis by creating moments in his plays in which complex questions of truth are being lived out. Marcel exhibits, through the characters in his plays, his belief that human beings must be willing to extend openness towards one another and be willing to address fundamental concerns and dilemmas of life, if truth is to be more than conceptual.

The historical time in which Marcel's plays would have been being widely performed and produced was the time that followed one of the most brutal, perplexing and devastating periods in European history -- the years of the Holocaust when millions were put to death, by other human beings "doing their job." Theoretically, industrious civilizations applaud people when they do their jobs. Conceptually the connection is made between doing ones job and being a responsible person. Yet in the context of the Holocaust, doing ones job meant being a cold-hearted murderer.

It could be argued that one of the reasons Marcel's plays were not more popular in the 1940s, 1950s and through today is that Marcel's plays force

human beings to confront the complexities of situations such as those in the war in which doing ones job means being vicious, cruel, and in every sense inhumane. It was too difficult following the war, humans would reason, to be confronted with ethical questions, that is, theory-into-practice questions. When a horrific human event is consciously confronted, each individual who addresses the event is forced in some manner to feel the potential within for both being devastated and for devastating others.

Marcel highlights in his plays the ethical gulf that can exist between logistical, practical and simplistic theories of what humans are to do and the atrocious consequences that can result when humans attend to these theories and ignore the actual situations of the human beings beside them that would make altering the theories appropriate. In Marcel's plays, the actualities of human lives are not evaded. He addresses such aspects of our lives, for example, as the fragility of human perspective -- that what one considers just in one context may be unethical in another; he addresses our deep-seated need to belong that can lead to choices that are at great cost to our souls. Marcel addresses the difficulties that ensue when human beings are desirous of living in profoundly loving ways towards one another and yet are situated in legalistic and logistical worlds.

It is not difficult to convince humans to agree <u>theoretically</u> that life is complex and that the complexities when ignored may lead to vicious

mistreatment of human beings. A nod of the head is all it takes for someone to agree theoretically with complexities. What is avoided; however, by most human beings is feeling situations of pain and complexity. To actually feel that one herself is trapped in dilemmas of right and wrong is uncomfortable. In feeling these dilemmas, one may also come face to face with the insight that she is not "doing so well" with her choices.

Human beings resist self confrontation. Marcel's characters violate the barriers we set up to avoid confrontation with our lives, for the characters mirror back to us our own weaknesses. One can imagine that when audiences are confronted by Marcel's plays that there is an atmosphere of nervous tension, of shifting in chairs, of wanting the play to end, now.

In his plays, Marcel dissolves dualities between the good characters and the bad characters. Often a character appears to be "good" (pious or moral or responsible) and yet is revealed in actuality to be hiding behind a mask of goodness. Claude, the pastor in A Man of God, as discussed above, is such a person hiding. These characters of Marcel's who mask good are actually hiding their terror at meeting themselves. In actuality, characters are often manipulative of situations and others in order to keep existential life at bay.

In his plays, Marcel presents what he considers to be inevitable complexities in relationship. He exhibits that there are many different ways to "read" human acts. Truth becomes a slippery concept to grab hold of in some

of his plays. For example, in his play Ariadne (1936), Ariadne's husband Jerome has an affair with a woman Violetta. At times Ariadne seems open-minded, understanding, and accepting of Jerome and Violetta's relationship. At other times, she is suspected of being kind to them in an attempt to cause feelings of shame and guilt within them about their choices. Is it her wish, ultimately, to create such disgust within themselves and towards one another that they voluntarily dissolve their lover relationship? (Marcel, 1936)

Near the end of the play, a series of events brings Ariadne, Violetta, and Jerome together to seek to unweave the tangled web of their relationships.

> **Ariadne:** Listen, Jerome. There's something I must say to you now, in front of Violetta - it's better in front of her .... It may surprise and upset you but that can't be helped. We *can't* go on like this, any of us. I used to believe there were harmless, even helpful lies. . . . Now I'm not sure . . . or anyhow I can't . . . Upstairs just now, while you two were alone, I prayed to - oh, I don't know what to call them - the Invisible Powers, to give me strength. I need it so much, for I'm certain this is the turning point of our lives. But I don't know if they heard me. I feel so terribly weak - quite, quite defenseless . . . and, oh, there's no kindness in your eyes.
>
> **Jerome:** But what's happened? You're talking as if *you* were guilty.
>
> **Ariadne:** Perhaps I am. Almost certainly I am. Back in Paris in April, I knew you were lovers. . . . I wasn't at all angry, not at all, with either of you. As soon as I saw Violetta, I loved her. I'd felt drawn to her even before we met, and before I knew what she meant to you. I realized at once how miserable she was about what she felt to be disloyalty to me, and I *had* to try to comfort her. . . . I don't think that was wrong of me, was it?
>
> **Jerome:** So your friendship . . .

> **Ariadne:** But where I was perhaps wrong was in making Violetta hide from you what had passed between her and me. . . . You see, I honestly believed that once you heard that I knew about you two, things would become impossible. I thought pride would make you break with her, and with me too, perhaps. Was I wrong? (Marcel, 1936, pp. 219-220)

At this point in the dialogue between Ariadne, Jerome, and Violetta, which is actually more of a monologue of Ariadne's, Ariadne appears honest, humble (she is willing to admit moments that she chose poorly in terms of how she handled Jerome and Violetta's relationship), and she appears compassionate towards both Violetta and Jerome (wishing from the start to discourage Violetta's guilt and to protect the relationship between Jerome and Violetta).

Honesty, humility, and compassion are usually qualities admirable in a person and yet the twist that Marcel throws in has to do with the actuality that Ariadne is not just a friend of Jerome's and Violetta's. She is Jerome's wife. Why is Ariadne so willing to share her husband with another without any apparent anger? Was Ariadne actually internally separated from Jerome and therefore so emotionally uninvolved that the marriage did not matter? If so, why did she stay in a "false" marriage?

These same questions are those Violetta seems to be raising when she says:

> **Violetta:** [*bitterly*] I think what you imagined to be a gesture of most generous renunciation was merely a pretext for intruding where you had no right to be - no right at all.

Jerome: Violetta!

Violetta: You had every right to condemn our love, to forbid it, to exclude it; but you had no right, by deceit, by making me admire you, by fascinating me, to insinuate yourself into its very heart, as if you wanted to . . . to taste at second-hand a fruit you could never have yourself.

Jerome: [*appalled*] Violetta! That's horrible!

Ariadne: [*firmly*] We're here to discover the truth, whatever it may be. Violetta must say what she really thinks, however much it hurts me.

Violetta: Perhaps I'm being unfair, I may have misjudged you abominably. I know, I admit it. But I can't be *sure*. And you can't make me sure, can you? Can you?

Ariadne: No, it's not in my power.

Violetta: You can't imagine the effect you had on me that first evening you came. I almost worshipped you. But gradually I found my adoration for you coming between Jerome and me. And yet I couldn't explain to him because of my promise to you. And he felt *something* was going on, and he was bewildered and grew angry with me - and with you too. So the situation between us became impossible. Something *had* to happen. And it did - Jerome asked me to marry him. And you - though you seemed to accept it and wanted to help - you said the one thing which could make me refuse him and hate the idea. And then I thought you'd worked it all out; the one sure way to separate me from Jerome. And you would still appear a heroine and a saint both to yourself and to me. You couldn't give *that* up! And when you said I must remember you'd forgiven me - oh, if you could only know how that tormented me. . . . Your forgiveness was like a knife turning in my heart. . . . So I decided never to see him again. (Marcel, 1936, pp. 220-221)

What is the audience to feel about Ariadne, about Violetta, about Jerome? Is Ariadne hiding behind a mask of goodness, behind a "holy complex" so as not to confront her own existential pain? Or is Ariadne truly a spiritual and

wise person who believes that love between two people can not be fought and that love is the kind of "truth" that she must support even if the love between others is hurtful to her? This latter impression, that Ariadne is a kind and compassionate person in ways unique to her, is supported throughout the play by comments of Jerome to Violetta about his wife - that she is from another world, that she hears the messages of a different more spiritually impassioned world.

Marcel intends Ariadne as a challenge to the audience. Throughout Marcel's works, he gives the impression that he is suspicious of individuals who seemingly transcend earthly emotions prior to any struggle with their emotions. It is too easy to be uninvolved, avoiding the tangible difficulties of life, and to falsely use spiritual transcendent values as the reason for one's noble actions. Marcel wants to challenge this kind of nobility.

A Passion For the Existential Struggle

Clearly, Marcel believes in a spiritual foundation of love, faith, hope out of which persons make decisions about how to act and yet he presupposes that the process to acting out of spiritual truths is one of struggle and contemplation. If the choice is made to be spiritually pure and less emotionally involved and if this choice is arrived at without deliberation and struggle, Marcel is suspicious that an individual is dodging her life (Marcel, 1965).

There is a tendency in human beings to seek simple explanations for human choices. Faith in the goodness of humanity provides a lens that interprets acts in spiritually righteous terms. Conversely, when it is doubted that human beings have spiritual cores, acts may be interpreted in a less spiritual and more cynical vein. For example, it may be said about a person that she acts in charitable ways in order to manipulate her social status. Marcel dissolves this either/or tendency towards, on the one hand, absolute faith in humanity and, on the other, total doubt that there is goodness.

Marcel believes that the sanctity of human life is preserved not by simplistic interpretations that separate the good persons from the bad. In Marcel's eyes, there are no such divisions. The sanctity of human life has to do with the idea that all human beings are faced with experiences that force them to confront the multi-dimensions of themselves. Marcel's perspective holds that a spiritual soul-full-ness is fundamental to life. And yet, at times the tensions of the temporal, ever-changing patterns of human experience find individuals caught in a labyrinth of superficial desire or covered in deceit, blind to the deeper meanings of their existence.

Marcel wishes to discourage anyone from holding the idea that she is exempt from fault and human struggle. When humans think, feel, and act based on the notion that they are exempted from the vicissitudes of life, abstract concepts are created and actions performed that are without heart,

without concrete meaning and purpose. Instead of surrendering to the terrors and difficulties of being in ways that lead to avoiding one's encounter with life, Marcel encourages human beings to admit confusion, to admit that both within themselves and surrounding them are contradictions. Marcel encourages puzzlement with life (Marcel, 1962).

When Marcel is not writing plays, he writes philosophical notes to himself, notes which in many instances are later published. In these notes, he presents concrete situations, that he or others have confronted, in order to weave relevant experience into his philosophical ideas. That Marcel presents concrete situations in his philosophical works as well as in his plays further separates Marcel's work from his criticism of Royce and Hocking, that their work needs more concreteness.

There is one particular situation that Marcel writes into several of his philosophical journals which raises a question fundamental to the complexities of creative fidelity. A person D-- is in need of the presence of a friend close to her. This friend promises on the phone that she will go see D-- tomorrow. This commitment is based on the present moment, a moment when the friend is desiring to give D-- pleasure and based on the fact that there is no other distraction presently.

However, Marcel raises the possibility that tomorrow the friend, at the time when she is to fulfill her commitment, no longer has the desire to see

D-- and instead is attracted by something that she had no idea of when she made her commitment to D--. What is she to do? Marcel writes in Being and Having (1965):

> How can I justify this dictatorship which I claim to exercise over my future actions, in the name of some present state? Where does this authority come from, and what lays claim to it? ... To look more closely, is not my present itself making an arbitrary claim to a sort of eternity of right. But in that case falsehood is established at the very heart of my life. For this pretended 'eternity of right', no corresponding continuity of fact can be found; and it seems that I am brought up against the following disconcerting alternatives. At the moment of my commitment, I either -- 1) arbitrarily assume a constancy in my feelings, which it is not really in my power to establish or 2) I accept in advance that I shall have to carry out, at a given moment, an action which will in no way reflect my state of mind when I do carry it out. [In the first case I am lying to myself, in the second I consent in advance to lie to someone else]. (p. 50)

Marcel in his description of this dilemma presents the axis around which all relationships turn -- what are we to do about commitment, a concept taught as if to do with humans whose feelings don't change, whose thoughts are static? Because humans are forever experiencing and because continuous experiencing has to do with feelings and thoughts simultaneously evolving, what meanings can our commitments authentically hold? Whether or not persons acknowledge the dilemma of commitment, and if acknowledged, how they live out the questions contained within the dilemma, are primary processes that shape the context of a relationship.

Because questions of commitment are so crucial to life, inquiring into Marcel's work for more of an answer to this dilemma than the presentation of a question is desirable. And yet, because of Marcel's phenomenological, non-positivistic nature, he never provides a clear answer, only sign posts along the way to guide individuals to their own conclusions.

On the one hand, he writes:

> Is not any promise whatever rooted in a state of mind which is entirely of the moment, and whose permanence nothing can guarantee? When I look at it like this, the very nature of fidelity seems to me suddenly covered by a thick veil; I can no longer understand what meaning the term 'commitment' has ever had for me. And now I call to mind once more the memory of all the disappointments, all the hatreds of myself and others which were the ordinary results of too hasty promises. Were they mere accidents? Or must we see them, on the contrary, as the natural effects of a most inexcusable presumption? At what price are they to be avoided? If we are to remain tied by our inward bond, must we not learn to shut our eyes to the contorted but fateful life-process which only a feeble sight will fail to discern beneath the accumulations of habit? To swear fidelity - whatever the object to which the vow is taken - what is it really but committing myself to ignore the deepest part of my being, to learn the art of duping myself constantly with tricks that I play upon myself, for my own deception? Indeed, can a commitment exist that is not a betrayal? (Marcel, 1965, p. 51)

This is Marcel's work at its most existential. One can not help but imagine what a different world we would live in relationally if we took questions about the concept of commitment itself seriously. In instances of pre-marital counseling, considered mandatory by some priests before they will marry a

couple, it would be valuable if throughout the counseling, questions were raised in the above Marcelian vein.

Sadly, too often the church is ignorant about what human beings actually face in relationship. This ignorance may cause individuals later in the relationship to condemn themselves or one another for struggles they encounter when in fact the struggles are born not out of any defect of character but rather out of being human. One of Marcel's most spiritual contributions to philosophical thought is his commitment to address actual tensions and situations that one who is human confronts.

To his question about any commitment being a betrayal, Marcel continues:

> But there is no betrayal which is not a repudiation of fidelity. Is there, then, such a thing as a basic fidelity, a primal bond, which I break every time I make a vow which in the least degree concerns what I vaguely call my soul? . . . This primal bond can only be what some people have taught me to call fidelity to myself . . . Myself: not my being but my becoming; not what I am today but what I shall perhaps be tomorrow. Here the mystery thickens. How can I be faithful, or again how can I be unfaithful to the Me whom today cannot know, and only the future will reveal? (Marcel, 1965, pp. 51-52)

What Marcel is asking about here is if there is an aspect to being that is non-alterable, not changed phenomenologically by experience. If so this may be the only aspect out of which one can make a commitment beyond the moment.

Is there a primal bond, a soul, that exists within and is transcendent of experience? Marcel says that yes, there is this universal existential truth, that there is soul. And yet this unvarying principle, soul, does not mean that human beings can rest assured once they identify soul that all dilemmas will be solved clearly and simply. Not at all. For Marcel the naming of soul is at the beginning of the individual's sense of her quest. Once one knows that there is soul, how is she to live regarding it? Only through struggling, questioning, that is through becoming.

Fidelity to the soul is perfected out of one's commitment to seek knowing God and to seek knowing one another. In this sense, the primary fidelity is to patience and humility with one another. In the mix and midst of all the difficulties encountered between us, truth unfolds. This truth evolves through living in the dark and the light of relationship. It is not discovered from a position of being exempted from struggle, a position that leads to ridiculing and condemning others. The destiny of Marcel's concrete philosophy has to do with the conjunction of two ideas, with "the labyrinth of existence and the rays of hope that cross it" (Marcel, 1973, p. 255), that is with struggle, faith, and grace.

Marcel applauds the "homo viator," the individual journeying, the individual underway, to destinations unknown. For the soul to remain vital, one must be always on the way. Whether we are spiritually available or

unavailable determines whether we live out of inner freedom and grace or conversely whether we live as an "agglomeration of smooth-running functions" (Marcel, 1952). At the closing of his book Homo Viator (1962):

> Oh, spirit of metamorphosis! When we try to obliterate the frontier of clouds which separates us from the other world guide our unpracticed movements! And, when the given hour shall strike, arouse us, eager as the traveller who straps on his rucksack while beyond the misty window-pane the earliest rays of dawn are faintly visible! (p. 270)

When hope in the deeper, more spiritual and meaningful dimension of life is lost, so is a sense of being and therefore a sense of love.

CHAPTER III

CULTURAL HISTORICAL ROOTS OF EXISTENTIAL INFIDELITY

CHAPTER III

CULTURAL HISTORICAL ROOTS OF EXISTENTIAL INFIDELITY

The truth of creative fidelity, as discussed in the preceding chapter, has to do with Marcel's belief that there is an ontological spiritual nucleus within every individual as well as a continuously evolving consciousness. Consciousness is both set (ontological) and evolving (continuously experiencing). Because every individual is situated in the flow of time and in the flux of continuous experience, there is always an aspect of consciousness constantly changing. One encounters the world, interpreting it through her ontological foundation and through her ongoing individual experiencing. World means here the diversity and communal values, beliefs, commitments, moods, desires, needs, purposes of the individuals who make up a person's world.

Arrived at in the previous chapter was an understanding that the primary fidelity Marcel hopes for humans is that individuals be present in patience, humility, and truth with one another through both the stabilities and instabilities of shared and individual existence. That we are failing at living lives of patience, humility, and truth with one another could be argued from the standpoint of the "voices" of contemporary tragedies.

Contemporary problems are symbolic of a void in trust and support between humans. Suicides, drug and alcohol addictions, obsessive television watching, destructive relationships are just some of the symptoms of our failings at meaningful, just relationships. It seems that our primary commitment is not to the multi-dimensional experience that comes from sharing life side by side but rather to perspectives that take control-over the vicissitudes of relationship and avoidance of feelings to be desirable.

Existentially, human beings are in a crisis of truth. Truth is a complex term describing a quality present between human beings. As discussed, existential truth is truth based on the dialectic between the set ontological and the "moving" texture of experiencing. It is a continuously evolving truth that unfolds through the relationships humans have to one another, to ideas, to God.

Perhaps in an effort to escape the pain inherent in a life lived beside other human lives, we attempt to deny the effects of shared relationship. To appear invulnerable to one another seems to be preferable. One of the ways we attempt to make ourselves immune to the difficulties of relationships is by seeking language to misrepresent the experience and abstract ourselves from it.

The Language of Prediction and Abstraction

Marcel considers the misrepresentation of language to be driven by the spirit of abstraction. Abstract language sterilizes the vitality of experiencing,

missing the texture of what it is to be human. It is Marcel's position that experience turns on itself, is existential, unique, and individualized. Thus there is no precedent for any one experience and efforts to predict the outcome and boundaries of experience are usually frustrated by the presentness of the experience itself.

The experience of relationship which is most meaningful is felt inwardly and subjectively. When an effort is made to objectify experience or to make it conform to a particular logic, it loses its quality of mystery, uniqueness, and any possibility of moving toward the aesthetic.

Our contemporary obsession with prediction of outcome or prescription for process has led us to deny both our religious and philosophical traditions and to confuse our individual perceptions. Contemporary western culture has become intrigued by the concept of purity while at the same time being drawn toward the corruption of its traditional meaning. Traditionally, purity had to do with the Greek attentiveness to the wholeness of the human being, a wholeness that encompassed, for example, reason (logos) and passion (eros).

The concept of purity has been altered to serve our industrial technologized interests, interests addressed as if unrelated to the aesthetic sensual dimension. Purity in these techno-industrialized terms is a concept de-eroticized and defined in terms of efficiency, productivity, and social convention. That this sterilized purity pervades human consciousness is apparent at the very least in terms of how individuals are "taught" about

their sexuality. Sexuality is often addressed as an uncontrollable desire somehow inside, somehow outside the individual and at the same time alien. This alien desire needs to be controlled lest it take over the life of the individual, destroying inhibitions and common sense. Sex is taught to be feared, not understood as relationship, but denied, as chaos. Hence, our sexuality, the very core of our being, is represented to us as our enemy and the potential for our destruction.

It can not be denied that our sexuality is a powerful influence on our lives. Sexuality between individuals can range from creative and caring to volatile and destructive. Both of these can be affirmed by our experience and therefore both qualities must by treated with sensitivity and respect. Sexuality, however, instructed as if outside the human self, alien and strange, is misleading and erroneous. Existentially, sexuality is woven into the tapestry of being human. A denial of sexuality as fundamental to our nature leads to the negation of the very foundation of the human experience.

When goals for humanity do not take into consideration the diverse quality of individuals within and between communities and do not take into consideration that individuals have needs, desires, and feelings, goals without existential meaning entrap us and become citadels of the soul. Too often when heterosexuality, masculinity, athleticism, or symmetry are the template for either correctness or goal, we must forego, negate, deny or surrender the very fundamentals of what it is to be unique, critical, and

interesting in the experiential sense. Therefore Marcel and others warn against prescribed and corporate lifestyle which extinguishes the fire of the individual's translation of her life to the world.

A poignant example of the negation of a person's experience can be viewed on the tombstone of Sgt. Leonard Matlovich. Matlovich was discharged from the Air Force in the mid-1970s because he was gay. He fought the discharge, received $160,000 for back pay, and in the fight, became a gay-rights activist. The words of his epitaph read: "When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one" (Morris, 1993).

The Metaphor of Disembodiment

Disembodiment is a metaphor used to describe the feeling of an individual encouraged to "abandon" some fundamental part of her being in order to adhere to social codes of rightness. It is important to note that disembodiment is used in the social, cultural sense to describe the experience of coming to the world inauthentically and is often used by Marcel, Merleau-Ponty, and others to underscore the damage inflicted on the individual by the requirements of sameness and conformity. As Marcel wrote, existence is indubitable. To exist is to be embodied. Every living human being is body.

Marcel's position is that the existence of the body is irrefutable. He holds that the body exists to all of our senses and therefore must be accepted as a fundamental segment of the phenomenological consciousness. When he

writes "I am my body," he asserts an existential wholeness opposed to the philosophical tradition of the critical dualism. The body is not separate from mind and soul nor can the body be reduced to anything else. It is here where Marcel lays claim to the concrete core of human existence.

Marcel values the phrase "Es denkt in mir" (in you is found you). He finds it to be more descriptive of existence than "cogito ergo sum." The latter is too often interpreted in pure rational and subjectivist terms. Though Marcel believes Descartes intended for the focus to be on "I am," scholars most often focus on and interpret Descartes' meanings in terms of cogito, "I think." "In you is found you" to Marcel does not mean solely "**in you are your thoughts**" but rather means "**in you are your thoughts which are incarnated in your body which is situated in the world.**" Encapsulated in this phrase "es denkt in mir" are meanings of embodiment, of feelings, memories, imaginings, the senses (Marcel, 1965).

Little have humans explored the existential meanings of phrases such as "es denkt in mir" because so much of intellectual discussion has been taken up with the idea that the important themes have to do with the abstracted eternal mind rather than with the body/mind/soul. The dualist perspective that there is mind separate from body is thoroughly integrated into our consciousness. Feminist scholars, liberation theologians, and existential phenomenologists, like Marcel, who fundamentally take life to be sacred in its mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects have sought to

dissolve the dichotomous tradition which underlies patriarchal consciousness and the critical dualism. In this view this dichotomy is the origin of many evils in the world -- ranging from violent death and destruction to broken marriages and dreams. It is at this point where the disintegration of the understanding of the total human begins, and results in withdrawal, fear, and social paranoia.

Human beings through the centuries of abstracted patriarchy have been led to follow laws and rules that enforce the mind/body dichotomy. In these terms life is segmented according to categories mental, spiritual, physical. What we are left with is confusion about our fragmented existence and no way to either understand or value the quality of our life.

Marcel's work is directed toward both encouraging and inviting each individual life to speak the terms of her concrete realities and further to inspire confidence to receive the truths of others. Embedded in this commitment is the necessity to understand the meaning of body in the world and to provide insight and security for individuals to speak and to hear.

The core meaning of body, phenomenologically, is that body describes the inescapable actuality that each individual is situated in the world, in her own body and separated in some ways from the feelings and experiences of others. Each individual is situated in a context that is solely hers and at the same time is always in relationship to others. Writer Delmore Schwartz

describes this with levity: "Existentialism means that no one else can take a bath for you" (Schwartz, 1948, p. 7).

The Particularity of Individual Experiencing

No two people can have the same experience, can share the same history, can sense the same sensual moments. Language offers us the only possibility of experience shared, yet language becomes paradoxical in that what is shared is language and not experience.

We are separated by the boundaries of our bodies. We are brought together by our shared hopes, dreams, desires, and loves. Within every individual body are the records, memories, notes of where she has been, what she has endured, what she has celebrated, been disappointed by. One of the reasons that it is impossible for another to actually choose for an individual is no one knows what an individual knows about her life.

Sitting on a New York subway one morning at 10:00 A.M. is an elderly lady, an overweight boy teenager, a guy with a guitar, a Spanish-American woman with several overstuffed grocery bags, a child grasping the hand of who looks to be his elegant mother, a girl on crutches, a very thin African-American man. These are the aspects that can be described of what is seen. Also seen are certain body gestures, postures -- the clinging nature of the child's hand against his mother's; the eyes, bloodshot in the case of the teenage boy; the left over scars of acne map the Spanish-American woman. Expressions, wrinkles, and miscellaneous details like the broken guitar string

indicate that each of these individuals is situated in worlds of chaos, questions, temptations, challenges.

What the hidden aspects of their lives are is a mystery and yet these undescribable dimensions are critical to each of their phenomenological realities. Important, phenomenologically, is the aspects un-seen about each of these individual lives, the aspects that can only be wondered. Imagine just for a moment the life of the African-American man. What are the places like that he has lived in, what were his experiences in school, with his family? Has this individual ever had anyone attempt to listen to him talk about what it feels like, in a certain moment, being him? Is he ever held or touched by another in an affectionate and caring way? Does he work? Where will he go today? How will he interpret his experiences? In the depth of those life-touched eyes, what has he seen? In the most profound depths of his gut, what has he felt?

What would it be like to be, for a moment, inside the consciousness of any one of those passengers on the subway? Would it fortify my own perceptions, further confuse them? Would there be a language housed inside one or all of these beings utterly foreign? How would it feel to be able to feel another, to know what her most existential moments have been?

There is something undeniably vulnerable about being receptive to the feeling expressions of another. What makes it so difficult to allow this kind of receptivity of feeling? Perhaps it is receptivity that makes us so poignantly

aware of our own vulnerability. Perhaps feared is the volume that gets turned up on our own palpable and inescapable pain when we hear the hurts of another. Perhaps feared is that another will affect us in such a way that our foundations, or perceived equilibrium, will be shaken.

In moments of a kind of visceral sharing, assumptions in consciousness about one another do often break down. Simplistic definitions become irrelevant and erroneous. Life wrapped in a tidy box in our minds becomes unwrapped. If we try to hold fast to prior assumptions held before this moment of shared communion, there is a feeling of chaos. There is a deeper truth, less definitional, less easily articulated trying to make itself known.

These deeper truths evolve in contexts in which individuals are willing to be vulnerable to one another, listening to and sharing feelings. Vulnerability is essential to the process of seeking deeper truths between us. Also essential is an intention to be patient through the spaces following shared vulnerability when the truths between us are changing, when the new truths have not yet been synthesized into logos.

It is difficult to be patient with not-knowing, with confusion. It is difficult to wait out times of feeling like there is not the slightest idea of what it is that is happening. For more profound and aesthetic understandings of one another to evolve, previous definitions of one another that no longer fit need to be aborted. This letting-go takes time and opens up voids in knowing.

It is as if the rational definitional dimension of consciousness must be coaxed to let go of previous understandings. Between holding fast to previous definitions and the synthesis of new interpretations, there is non-definitional space. Through a willingness to live through these moments and hours of not-knowing, more aesthetic and profound understandings of one another are being synthesized in order to be integrated into consciousness.

The Social Phenomenon of Consciousness

In which contexts of our lives do we experience a mutual vulnerability between ourselves, contexts in which our individual interpretations are openly shared? When there is not a sense of being situated in contexts that are receptive to our individual meanings, we are inwardly alienated and isolated from one another.

When an individual feels her interpretations are unacceptable, for whatever reason she believes this to be the case, her public dialogue is not the only dialogue affected. Her private dialogue may also dissolve. When this happens, she becomes dissociated from her felt interpretations of her own experiencing, no longer having a sense of what it is she does value, or what it is she does believe, or how it is she does feel.

Social phenomenologists, including thinkers such as Wilhelm Reich, Erich Fromm, Thomas Szasz, R. D. Laing, in each of their particular sociological, psychological, philosophical voices, emphasize the central role

relationship plays in the development and evolution of the individual's lived experience. Because the individual is born into a world inhabited by other humans and because the brain is an entity that must adapt to the world "in which it is situated," it is difficult to draw any solid, immutable lines between the consciousness of one and the collective consciousness of her different worlds.

I know me through the eyes of the world in reflection. The world knows itself in me. A circular relationship . . . no clear lines of demarcation. Character and culture go hand in hand. What appears in the infant is created by the surrounding culture and in turn reproduces that culture (Reich, 1950).

The individual is embodied in a world context. There is no embodiment outside of context. The edges, textures, foundations of any given context inextricably shape, form, and affect the selves who are in that world. Arno Gruen, a contemporary psychologist from the social phenomenological school of thought, writes about the impact of the world one is born into on her inner dialogue.

In his work The Insanity of Normality (1992), Gruen describes schizophrenia and psychopathology as two responses indicative of a culture misattentive to the human condition. Through hours spent listening to people talk about their alienation, pain, and suffering, Gruen comes to see destructiveness and evil in ways different from what he interprets Freud to mean.

Gruen refutes Freud's idea that human beings have an innate predisposition toward violent and destructive behavior. This idea Gruen takes to be a rationalization of evil that explains destructiveness between human beings as natural.

What is natural, according to Gruen, is not an innate tendency toward destructiveness, toward visiting pain and harshness on others, but rather Gruen thinks that what is innate is the adaptive tendency of the brain that enables humans to join and belong to cultural contexts. When the world children are born into gives credence to the "something that I have" (the world of possessions, of status) rather than to the "something that I am" (the world of inwardness and existence), a barren world unfavorable for reflection and genuine feeling is created.

"Our civilization . . . has made us anxious and ashamed if we feel vulnerable. The language of 'reality' promises us relief from the 'burden' of our needs, making us ready to stop trusting our own perceptions" (Gruen, 1992, p. xii). Gruen argues that out of this perspective that devalues the young individual's perception, self-hatred is created within humans. This self-hatred, which Gruen believes is the root of evil, originates from the self-betrayal that begins in childhood when children surrender their autonomy in order to be "loved" by parents, teachers, adults, siblings, and friends who are perceived to have power over them. Gruen defines autonomy as:

> A condition of integration in which the possibility of living in harmony with one's own needs and feelings is realized. What is meant here are not those feelings and needs artificially produced by the consumer society but those originating in the joy produced by a mother's love for the aliveness of her child or in the sorrow stemming from the lack of this love. Children's genuine reactions to the truth of their situation form the sole source of their autonomous development. Only when they do not have to deny their perceptions or feelings will they remain in contact with the inner and outer experiences that stimulate growth and be able to connect both kinds of experiences. (Gruen, 1992, pp. 26-27)

Children begin to deny their own perceptions, to lose consciousness of themselves, when they are guided to focus on appearances and pretenses concerning situations, that is on what others say is going on, rather than on what the children feel to be actually happening. "The foundation of our wholeness lies in what our feelings and our heart tell us" (Gruen, 1992, p. xii).

When the inner world of genuine feelings of an individual finds no acceptance nor compatibility with other human beings, either schizophrenia or psychopathy may result. What begins is a process, according to Gruen, in which individuals become separated from the actualities of the world (in schizophrenia) or from the feelings (in psychopathy). Confusion about <u>what is</u> ensues as well as confusion about who can be trusted.

In schizophrenia, a human being lives totally within her own "reality." The perceptions and actions of others are mistrusted and in some cases completely shut out from one's own consciousness. The individual expressing herself this way is psychologically rebelling against a world that she believes to be unfair, destructive, absolutely hypocritical, and without

meaning. Gruen points out that through this consciousness, love is defined as an experience to be attained only by someone willing to surrender her truths to the hypocrisy of the surrounding world. Because the person suffering schizophrenia distrusts love, she relinquishes being loved. Schizophrenia separates an individual from the world because she believes there to be "no place" for her pain and vulnerability in the actual world. In this sense, experiencing schizophrenia is an admission of pain and fragility.

Conversely, according to Gruen, the psychopathic response is a denial of one's inwardness, pain, and struggle. The choice is made to be adaptive to the world rather than to isolate oneself, as in schizophrenia, from the hypocrisies. In order to fit into the world, one obeys and conforms not in the ordinary sense, however, but in the pathological sense to the requests and opinions of those around them.

Through one's conformant psychopathic behaviors, Gruen points out that the message one intends is: "Look! I am doing what you want, and therefore you must love me" (Gruen, 1992, p. 154). The child who is given the choice to manipulate for love above all else learns early in her life not to attend to authentic feelings but rather to act in ways to achieve what she wants.

Psychopathology is a condition that occurs when a person commits to conformity and in the extreme sense disregards the consequences to herself or others. One conforms to the particular social code and avoids inwardness and

feeling in an attempt to gain acceptance and ultimately power over others willing to be submissive. It is an escape from the tumultuousness of the feeling side of life. Gruen writes throughout his work of people who exemplify having made these choices, such as many of the German perpetrators of the holocaust.

"They could beat a person to death, and they were absolutely normal while they were doing it - that I can't understand" (Gruen, 1992, p. xiii), says a Pole who was at one time in the concentration camps. The nonchalant appearance of some of the German perpetrators has to do with the phenomenon, according to Gruen, of their complete dissociation from their own feelings.

What makes the psychopathic response so terrifying is that it may masquerade as sanity yet simultaneously visit extreme destruction on human beings and nature. These individuals can seem the most rational, organized, and compassionate human beings because their commitment is to act in ways that blend with their context, and yet, while smiling, be extremely harmful in both subtle and overt ways. Their commitment is to appearances, not to genuine feelings within themselves or to empathy for anyone else.

Individuals, such as the German perpetrators, may feign emotion and not actually feel. The reason that they can kill and appear unaffected is because they <u>are</u> unaffected emotionally, Gruen says. These persons deny the inwardness of the self a right to exist.

> One way or another, they will always be intent on silencing the inner voice in themselves and others. They resemble George Orwell's Grand Inquisitor in 1984, who cannot tolerate the inner doubts of his victims. Their actions are less of a problem for him; it is the inner self that he must kill in them as well as in himself.
>
> This undiagnosed insanity is more of a threat to humankind today than ever before because the means of destruction in the hands of the power hungry have never been greater. Illness of this kind differs from schizophrenia in one crucial aspect: schizophrenics struggle with themselves in an effort to come to terms with an intolerable world, whereas the power hungry, who are considered sane, struggle to subdue other people in order to feel secure themselves. (Gruen, 1992, p. 141)

Gruen cautions that insane actions are often carried out in the name of "realism," justified as "the way things are." It takes someone with an intense hunger for the vitality of life to resist getting caught in the conformity of a world driven by control over feelings.

The Forgotten World of Feelings

When humans are dissociated from the inner world of their feelings, they are separated from their sense of what is right and good and humane in their relationships. Justice, Gruen agrees with Marcel, is not possible unless humans become attuned to the inwardness of their experiences and express these truths in the context of their personal and social relationships.

Marcel is suspicious of personal relationships and societal systems that promote existential disequilibrium by discouraging the growth and development of the integrity of the individual. He calls these totalitarian systems and perceives the result of these systems to be the dehumanization of

individuals by disembodying them from the organic nature of their feelings, beliefs, and imaginings. By negating the embodiment of life within the individual expressed through her desires and volition, a psychotic condition arises in which deep basic needs are overlooked. "Boredom, sexual immorality, and drunkenness are, as it were, irrefutable symptoms of a deep-seated lesion" (Marcel, 1955, p. 16). Lost within these totalitarian systems is an inner certitude regarding one's feelings of inwardness.

When feeling is de-emphasized and devalued, aspects of the spiritual dimension of human existence dissolve and are forgotten. Marcel and Hocking agree that the spiritual dimension is only known through felt experience. The spiritual can not be known as objective, factual matter. It is felt as a certain kind of meaning, not measurable in mathematical terms, nor definable through logistical formulas. In a book written about the metaphysics of feeling entitled The Felt Meaning of the World (1986), author Quentin Smith writes of the perception of feeling in a way similar to the ideas Marcel holds:

> If feelings are understood in terms of themselves, from the perspective inherent in feelings themselves, they do not appear as inferior versions of reason that are in the service of the latter, but as a phenomena with a positive nature of their own. They relate, not to rational meanings but to felt meanings, to the ways in which things are important. They are appreciations of things for being important. (p. 18)

The absence of the spirit in so many religious sects, movements, and institutions seems to have to do with the invalidation of individual felt experience. The daily experiences of human beings that have to do with everything from the basics of eating to feeling loved and to loving are often considered and responded to not in terms of the feelings they elicit in the individual but rather as predictable definable experiences sometimes mandated and prescribed in the name of religious, and other, legalistic dogmas of right and wrong. Individuals use "formulas of right" to mandate lives, referencing God or the founding fathers or other authoritative "symbols of hegemony" as justification.

Religious dogma, for example, is proclaimed to be a projection of the way of God. In many instances, the proclaimed way of God is a way abstracted from the concrete concerns and desires a human has in her life, yet these religious rules are constructed as ideals through which the individual is to measure her human worth. As previously discussed, when the measure for worthiness is an abstract notion, not one connected to the poignant and sometimes painful struggle a person has with concerns and desires, human vitality is diminished. When the heartfelt soulful concerns and feelings are drowned out by the laws of dos and don'ts, something dies spiritually in the human heart.

Marcel's plays, as noted, are stories of everyday happenings between people. In this sense, they are slice-of-life plays, providing a glimpse into the

mundane dimension of existence. What makes them also plays about consciousness, about interiority, are the characters in Marcel's plays who speak the unspeakable, the characters who name what it is that is hidden, who name the what that contributes to the relationships being convoluted or weird or confusing or hurtful. These are the characters who express authentic feeling about themselves in relationship to the others in their lives.

Christine speaks about the broken world to her friend Denise in The Broken World (1932) [quoted in second chapter] as does Osmonde, the daughter of Claude, the pastor, and Edmee, his wife, in A Man of God (1925). When Osmonde is old enough to protest, she begins to raise some serious questions about the commitments of her parents' lives. What does it all mean, she wishes to grasp.

> **Osmonde:** Oh, I know you think of life as a gift from God, as a glorious opportunity. When you say the word 'life' your voice has a special ring in it. Whereas to me it seems silly and meaningless. . . . Marriage . . . children . . . Is that what you mean? . . . Look at our friends here - Henrietta Bellanger, Jeanne Schild. . . . They are married, they have children. Well, I can see nothing particularly admirable, nothing to envy in their lives, nothing that even interests me. . . . Their lives are narrow and difficult. . . . Do let me explain. I don't know whether they're happy or not. But, assuming that they are, all it means is that they have husbands who are tolerably faithful to them. . . . Children who don't give too much trouble and only get ill three or four times a year. No, it's not good enough. I can't see the point of lives like those, and if mine is to be cast in the same mould. . . . Perhaps those women's lives are all exactly the same, like copies of a newspaper printed by the million, like tracts.
>
> **Claude:** We must conform to the laws of life, make them our own, and then finally want them for their own sake.

Osmonde: That's only words, because whether you want them or not -

Claude: It's not only words, it's a great truth. We must receive in order to give.

Osmonde: Receive what? Give what? And if it simply means passing on something to others who will pass it on in their turn, what's the good of it all? Why rush blindly in the dark? . . . People like me need to lean on someone else's faith. Up till now yours has kept me going, your faith. But when one is too miserable, that's not enough.
(pp. 61-62)

The initial "cry in the wilderness" like this of Osmonde or that of Christine and others who ignite the lives situated in Marcel's plays is a cry often heard through the voice of the child (the same kind of conversation as is present here between Osmonde and her father takes place between the child Jean and his stepmother Rose in the play The Rebellious Heart (1918)), or the cry is heard through the voice of a woman.

That children and women speak the unspeakable is an understandable Marcelian choice when considering child and woman as archetypes. The archetype of child has traditionally been symbolic of free expression, spontaneous action, and vulnerability. This archetype as innocent, free, and vulnerable is becoming anachronistic as our children become jaded by the madness in our culture as is the archetype becoming anachronistic that is typically associated with woman.

Before women found themselves competing with men for power over situations and people, the archetype of woman was symbolic of nurturing,

gentleness, and vulnerability. Traditionally, both children and women archetypally have been symbols of the inner world of feelings. As many social critics have postulated, perhaps one of the reasons that children have been so often abused by angry adults and women by angry men has to do with a patriarchal mindset that devalues feelings and loathes vulnerability, a mindset held by people, both male and female, who abuse, through their pretense of invulnerability.

The Texture of Invulnerability

When humans pretend to be beyond the human struggle, in seemingly permanent moods of invulnerability, they are participating in the demolition of passion, their own and others. Marilyn French, in her book Beyond Power (1985) writes in ways that echo some of Marcel's concerns. Her rather lengthy tome is an anthropological, psycho-social, historical, philosophical study of what happens when human beings become committed to control over existential experience rather than to receptivity to one another in lives of sharing, care, and struggle.

French believes that right meaning is found not in concepts that consider life most perfect when it seeks to be transcendent of the actualities of the human quest but rather in concepts that address the light/dark, good/bad, lucid/confusing aspects of human experience. Transcendent concepts that avoid human ambiguities encourage humans to force and exert power and control over the vitality of life. "Searching for meaning in what is

superhuman, men have ignored their humanity, the only possible ground for human meaning" (French, 1985, p. 535).

Presently human beings are in a crisis of non-creative infidelity. Largely responsible for this crisis is the way in which humans have been, for reasons already discussed and for reasons that will be explored, miseducated about the challenges and complexities of the human condition, and in so many instances, the way in which humans have been neglected emotionally.

The emotional feeling dimension has traditionally been devalued in western culture or sentimentalized. The belief that feelings are central to the intentions and desires of humans in fields such as phenomenological psychology, existential phenomenology, and the arts, is being reinforced and more progressively understood in fields such as neurophilosophy, quantum physics, and liberation theologies. Coming to be is a more widespread recognition of feelings as the central core around which the spheres of our lives educationally, personally, and industriously turn.

When individuals are encouraged to act as if what is happening in their lives fits definitional molds, they are being encouraged in too many instances to be liars to themselves and to one another. If a person recognizes this and chooses not to lie, she may say "there is no such thing as truth so what do my thoughts and feelings mean anyway? I have no truth." This too is an evasion.

In the world that exists between any two people in any given situation, there are truths that they can speak to one another that can provide more of a sense of honesty, a feeling of presence, and of shared sanity. Intimated here is not that there are conclusive, definitional words that humans can speak to one another. Rather this language of relational truths is vast, at times poetic, scientific, spiritual, convoluted, confused. This truth is as multifaceted as the consciousness of the individual describing her particular experience.

The language spoken between may define the truth shared as one of understanding or confusion or sadness or joy. What is spoken may lead to celebration or despair or further confusion or more lucid understanding. There is absolutely nothing predictable nor "canned" about this truth. The only thing that can be conclusively said about it is that it does exist and that it is not a truth that one can come to nor understand without being willing to know authentic feeling.

As discussions about truth too often lead to false static notions, discussions about the "process" of feelings are subject to the same dulling abstract and meaningless misnomers. Feelings, just as truth, are taught as static formulas. "If this happens, X is appropriate to feel, not Y." Too often humans are not encouraged to know the visceral bodily sense of authentic feeling that leads to the most personal ways of experiencing one's experience.

The popular psychology books and weekend seminars that have proliferated recently are a testimony to the technological way in which we

desire to view even our interior lives. Often learned by the many people who read these books and attend these seminars is a new language which masquerades as feeling but that is without the passion of human beings who actually experience their experiences with their own feelings. For example, "that is my isolation" is a phrase from one of these seminars; "the inner child, the rebellious child" are taught as words to speak to explain feelings. These metaphors can be helpful in terms of validating and encouraging inwardness and existence, yet too often they are memorized as chemistry equations are memorized, water = H_2O, further reinforcing that there is no such thing as existential inwardness.

Perhaps we are quite confused about the world of feeling, misunderstanding it as a dimension of experience that can be taught through formulas. Taught are models assumed applicable to human experience. Generalized understandings are brought to experiences of love, work, sexuality, sickness, being a parent, a friend, a professor. The tendency is to explain ourselves to ourselves in these generalizable categories and to meet others through these prefabricated lenses. What is missed is the existential pulse of a person's life when limited to this technology of understanding.

Part of the isolation that human beings are presently experiencing both within and between one another evolves out of this widespread and longstanding tradition that has miseducated about human experiencing. The way human truths have too often been instructed has in large part been based

on political purpose rather than based on the possibility of aesthetic, spiritual, and ethical meaning between people. Why humans have structured so many aspects of the social and cultural order in terms of power relationships or in terms of controlling relationship requires further exploration.

Teaching truth in political terms leads to understanding relationship in terms of legal and institution metaphors. "Party of the first party, party of the second party," for example, are legal terms used to describe two human beings going through a divorce. LD is used to name a person who is having learning difficulties. The acronym, no doubt, is impersonal. So are the terms that so many acronyms represent. Learning disability (LD), attention deficit disorder (ADD) are terms mechanical, cold, matter-of-fact. This use of language is unsuccessful at reflecting that human beings are in vital struggle, in the first instance with broken dreams, in the latter with the challenge of learning.

Walker Percy in his book The Message in the Bottle (1954), agrees with Marcel that the spirit of the modern age is a spirit of abstraction:

> Science cannot utter a single word about an individual molecule, thing, or creature in so far as it is an individual but only in so far as it is like other individuals. (p. 22)
>
> The spirit of the age can not address one single word to him as an individual self but can address him only as he resembles other selves. Man did not lose his self in the modern age but rather became incommunicado, being able neither to speak for himself nor to be spoken to. (p. 26)

Our language is a language that objectifies human experience because our perception of the world is an objectivist perception. The world is out there to be had. The emphasis is on having experience rather than being. People have one another, jobs, marriages, children, ideas, experiences, material objects. What is encouraged in the language is the pursuit, ownership, and control of the world rather than a receptive, reflective, contemplative life through which being is revealed.

Perhaps listening and being heard is dependent on recovering a language outside of the scientific and the politically driven realms. As a reaction to the coldness of the language of science and politics, an interest in poetic language and consciousness has been a concern of Percy, a concern shared by philosophers such as Marcel and Heidegger.

Poetic language, that is language that is not bound by the laws of syntax and grammar and not bound by the task of reflecting a logical explanation of reality, is the form that comes the closest to languaging human meaning, both the profane and sacred. In poetry there is rhythm, discord, harmony. Words become like the notes of music. The spaces between hold silence for reflection and feeling to occur.

Marcel did not write poetry per se though his philosophical language is certainly more poetic than analytical in form. Marcel <u>did</u> write music. He believed that words were useful in terms of reflecting about the meaning of life and that through dialogue words set the context for the deeper mystery to

be revealed, though he believed words unable to be the actual means through which this ontological mystery of being reveals itself.

In dialogue, pauses, places for questioning, and moments in which wonder and awe may be met are important. In music, the sound and silence creates an aesthetic medium in which meaning is revealed. In his youth, music provided for Marcel the presence and assurance of the sacred in human life. He listened in awe to Bach, Schumann, Mozart, Beethoven. And he himself composed music.

Marcel writes of the metaphysics of music as described in Arthur Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation (1818/1958) as inspiring and instructive for him. Schopenhauer calls music the most powerful of all of the arts in its representation of will and feeling. Music gives a true and complete picture of the world with its shades of joy, grief, love, hatred, terror, hope. Within the universal language of music what is presented is the spiritual feeling life.

Marcel agrees with Schopenhauer that music presents the universal mystery, the transcendent. Without this spiritual dimension revealed in music, human lives lack a level of humanness, dignity, and depth. Each particular individual hears the universal meaning in the music by way of her inwardness and depth.

Today, our language, formulaic rather than poetically descriptive, our music, sounding as computers screaming, indicates our reluctance and

resistance to mutual receptivity of one another's inwardness. In the relationships we progressively construct that objectify what is personal, institutionalize what is profound, legalize what is existential, some poignant questions surface.

Where can an individual take and to whom can she share her pain, her rage, her fear? How are we to find lives existentially responsive to the profundity of our needs? Are we tragically bound to choosing between suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, psycho-pharmaceuticals, emotional vapidity, or deceit to oneself and one another? Have legalized definitions taken human consciousness to a point of no return for meanings of the soul? Is it our nature to denigrate the sacred integrity of the mind and the body?

The Recovery of a More Embodied Consciousness

Much of what has been discussed in this chapter about the limits we impose on our feelings and on our descriptions of personal truth seemingly has to do with our inordinate desire for control-over. We continuously forego leading lives of spiritual, aesthetic, and sensuous meanings for lives that are committed to control over the flux of relationship in particular and experience in general. Why is control so important to human beings? The choice to control is sometimes conscious, sometimes a sort of automatic, non-conscious response. It is in any event pervasive.

In the last ten years, feminist scholars, phenomenologists, cultural anthropologists have dedicated much effort to understanding why culture

has evolved in such a way that values control and domination over relational values of vulnerability, compassion, and care. Prior to the last decade, during most periods of western study, different thinkers have in some sense addressed this question by postulating theories about human nature. Depending on whether the thinker was politically inclined, mythically driven, psychologically geared, religiously concerned, naturalistically committed, his and in limited cases her theories would reflect these biases. What was common to most of the theories, however, was the acceptance of a circular argument.

This circular argument proposes that control is the highest good because it is the value fundamental to patriarchy and western civilization is a civilization of patriarchy. Most of the theories provide explanations for why it is "natural" for humans to seek domination and control over one another and therefore why it is natural that civilization is patriarchal.

A fundamental question until recently was left out of this circular argument. Why do humans so readily accept that control is fundamental to human nature? Once the question is raised, a common response is to refer to historical examples of a human or humans controlling others as evidence supporting the idea that if humans have always been controlled or controlling, then it must be "natural." Yet, what this evidence indicates is not control as natural and fundamental to existence but rather that patriarchy has existed throughout western civilization.

During and since World War II, human beings have exhibited the increasingly horrendous and terrifying power of the human/technological ability to control in such a way that decimates human, animal, and plant life. Simultaneously, humans exhibit a willingness to succumb to moral and spiritual anomie. As technology evolves, these problems worsen. Is this way of life really natural. Is humanity doomed to this fate?

Until feminist and other scholars evolved who are devoted to the task of attempting to stretch consciousness beyond the hegemony of patriarchy, it did seem natural that some humans necessarily destroy and control other humans. Implicit has been the assumption that patriarchy is because patriarchy is. More than not, it has been accepted as an organization of human life that reflects human nature.

In the cultural evolution of "primitive" to "civilized" human, the assumption is that there has always been a preoccupation with conquering, killing, and dominating. In her book The Chalice and the Blade (1987), Riane Eisler reconstructs the past, bringing new archeological findings together with the feminist perspective. The new findings are a result of progressive technology in use since World War II, such as radiocarbon dating methods, that have increased archeologist's grasp of the past. As dating has become a function of verifiable techniques, for example, "one could no longer get away with saying that if an artifact was more artistically or technologically

developed, it must date to a later and thus presumably more civilized time" (Eisler, 1988, p. 10).

Through this progression in dating technology coupled with a shift in the questions being raised that undermine previously accepted givens of patriarchy, scholars are altering what is known of human origins. Cave sanctuaries, figurines, burials, and rites from as far back as 20,000 years ago point to a belief system held in ancient times that revere the source of human, animal, and plant life as the Mother Goddess.

> Our early ancestors recognized that we and our natural environment are integrally linked parts of the great mystery of life and death and that all nature must therefore be treated with respect. This consciousness - later emphasized in Goddess figurines either surrounded by natural symbols such as animals, water, and trees or themselves partly animal - evidently was central to our lost psychic heritage. Also central to that lost heritage is the apparent awe and wonder at the great miracle of our human condition: the miracle of birth incarnated in woman's body. Judging from these early psychic records, this was a central theme of prehistoric Western systems of belief. (Eisler, 1988, p. 3)

Eisler holds that the reason that prehistoric civilizations have been assumed to have been male-centered and male-dominated is that the lens through which scholars have been researching assumes ancient systems to have been centered around hunting rather than around fertility and communities of nurturing. When female as well as male scholars began to question the assumption of pervasive male dominance, cave paintings began to be seen in a new light. Previous patterns on the cave walls taken to be

males hunting became seen as forms that are actually women dancing. Painted objects before taken to be weapons for hunting became seen as stems, branches, and roots of trees.

A new perspective on the origins and the evolution of both religion and civilization began to surface:

> The Neolithic agrarian economy (9000 - 8000 B.C.E.) was the basis for the development of civilization leading over thousands of years into our own time. And almost universally, those places where the first great breakthroughs in material and social technology were made had one feature in common: the worship of the Goddess. (Eisler, 1988, p. 9)

Art from the Neolithic period is devoid of ruler-ruled, master-slave imagery characteristic of dominator societies.

Archeological research over the last forty years has contributed knowledge that civilization is older and more widespread than previously thought and news that the ideology of the earliest civilizations was gynocentric. In fact, Eisler writes, in all the places where the first major breakthroughs in social and material technology were made, God was a woman.

> The central religious image was a woman giving birth and not, as in our time, a man dying on a cross. It would not be unreasonable to infer that life and the love of life - rather than death and the fear of death - were dominant in society as well as art. (Eisler, 1988, pp. 20-21)

It is strange that civilization has evolved into a people who denigrate the body and further demean the female when all of life originates in the womb of woman. This is indicative of how removed we have become from the recognition of human life as sacred and how perhaps terrified we are by those aspects of ourselves that are by nature awesome.

While we have evolved technologically, spiritually there has been something of a de-evolution. Unlike our denial of the spiritual at the altar of the profane, in the Neolithic civilization, there was no separation between the secular and the sacred.

> To say the people who worshipped the Goddess were deeply religious would be to understate, and largely miss, the point. . . . As religious historians point out, in prehistoric and, to a large extent, well into historic times, religion was life, and life was religion. (Eisler, 1988, p. 23)

In large part, what still prevails in the perspective of many is a view that male dominance, along with private property and slavery, are all by-products of these early Neolithic agrarian people. Eisler points out the actualities brought about by recent research indicate that there was no ranking along a patriarchal masculine-feminine scale in these agrarian civilizations. "In these societies we see no signs of the sexual inequality we have all been taught is only 'human nature' " (Eisler, 1988, p. 14).

Previous research reflects that scholars assumed it is "human nature" for one group to try to dominate and control the thoughts, feelings, and

actions of other groups. Because of this assumption, when artifacts have been uncovered that undeniably pointed to an extended age of the Goddess, what was assumed is that these earlier civilizations were matriarchal, that is dominated by women, rather than patriarchal, the idea being that some group must have been in charge.

That previous civilizations were matriarchal is often given as a reason for why patriarchy evolved. As a backlash against being dominated, men, it is reasoned, organized physical and mental forces to usurp power from women (French, 1985). When it became more and more evident that the findings did not support the conclusion that females had previously dominated, many scholars returned to the previously held conclusions that males must have dominated even during the age of the Goddess.

According to Eisler, the evidence neither supports the view that males dominated nor that females dominated.

> To begin with, the archeological data we now have indicate that in its general structure prepatriarchal society was, by any contemporary standard, remarkably equalitarian. In the second place, although in these societies descent appears to have been traced through the mother, and women as priestesses and heads of clans seemed to have played leading roles in all aspects of life, there is little indication that the position of men in this social system was in any sense comparable to the subordination and suppression of women characteristic of the male-dominant system that replaced it. (Eisler, 1987, pp. 24-25)

While the feminine principle was celebrated in Neolithic art as the miracle of life, males played principle roles as priests alongside the priestesses.

Predominant is evidence that suggests that there was a partnership between men and women rather than the domination of one sex over another. The power given to the females as the heads of families and clans was equated not with domination, oppression, and fear but rather with responsibility and love. What is made possible by these recent findings is an alternative way to view human organization, as a "partnership society in which neither half of humanity is ranked over the other and diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority" (Eisler, 1987, p. 28).

The early European Minoan civilization of the island of Crete was peaceful, aesthetic, and democratic. It is studied as representative of the last prepatriarchal western culture. The metals initially discovered from this civilization through excavations have been previously thought to have been weapons. However, through recent research, these metals are now thought to have been used as ornaments and religious symbols. What this indicates, according to Eisler, is that technologies, up until 3200 years ago when the civilization of Crete fell, were used for the purpose of supporting and enhancing the quality of life.

The time when technology began to be used for the purpose of taking life rather than enriching life was the time of the invasions of the nomad warriors. It was through the nomadic clans who moved into established civilizations to disrupt and take them over that metals began being used for the purpose of destruction.

The shift from a partnership to a culture of domination was relatively sudden. Eisler explains this sudden shift in terms of the chaos theory of change. Unpredictable change happens when "long-established states of systems equilibrium and near equilibrium can with relative rapidity shift to a far from equilibrium, or chaotic, state" (Eisler, 1987, p. 49).

In the nomadic barbaric invasions, not only were people massacred, people were also enslaved as property. Houses, places of worship, pieces of art were destroyed. As this widespread destruction was taking place, new social and ideological definitions began to evolve.

A fundamental shift in consciousness occurred. The view of position and place in culture as purposeful in order to support and nurture life gives way to a definition of power for the purpose of dominating and destroying.

> Now everywhere the men with the greatest power to destroy - the physically strongest, most insensitive, most brutal - rise to the top, as everywhere the social structure becomes more hierarchic and authoritarian. Women - who as a group are physically smaller and weaker than men, and who are most closely identified with the old view of power symbolized by the life-giving and sustaining chalice - are now gradually reduced to the status they are to hold hereafter: male-controlled technologies of production and reproduction. (Eisler, 1987, p. 53)

The Goddess loses centrality, being relegated to the status of the wife or mother of the male gods of war and thunder. Simultaneously, the partnership culture of Minoan Crete gives way to a culture of domination brought by the barbarian warriors. By 1100 B.C.E. civilizations that had before

been focused on the nurturance of life have become civilizations of destruction. The focus in these latter civilizations is war, constraint, and death rather than peace, creativity, and life.

Groups of people began to be set against other groups of people. Men were set against women and against other men. There was no haven, no safe place left in the ancient world.

> For this was now a world where, having violently deprived the Goddess and the female half of humanity of all power, gods and men of war ruled. It was a world in which the blade, and not the chalice, would henceforth be supreme, a world in which peace and harmony would be found only in the myths and legends of a long lost past. (Eisler, 1987, p. 58)

Not only were social relationships drastically altered and settlements demolished, but also spiritual understandings were transformed. From the worship of the Goddess and priests and priestesses, devotion was shifted toward a monotheistic male God.

As these outer changes were transpiring, an inward change of consciousness was being forced and instilled. This inward change was necessary in order to insure that the perspective that viewed culture in terms of partnerships between humans was altered to a perspective holding that it is right, good, and holy for certain men to dominate and rule.

Eisler points out that a certain social consciousness is perpetuated by both biological factors (the replication of DNA) as well as through social

factors that coerce people to adopt and persist with particular beliefs. The insidious aspect of this dynamic is that people are taught to think of the dominant belief system as a given, as preordained by God or by some scientific fact of human nature. What actually perpetuates patriarchy, however, is not God nor human nature but the constructed belief that it is natural and desirable for certain human beings to dominate and control others. To subjugate some to the will of others requires that societies tell stories that justify relationships of inequality and oppressive servitude.

The Garden of Eden is a profound example, Eisler points of, of how stories have been told in order to indoctrinate people into a way of seeing woman (Eve) as evil and nature (serpent) as threatening and therefore appropriately needing to be controlled by man. From the perspective of the Goddess era, the relationship between Eve and the serpent holds very different meanings from the accepted patriarchal interpretation.

From the former perspective, the serpent is a symbol of wisdom, of insight, an adviser to the Goddess. It was natural for women to "listen" to serpents as it was necessary for women to eat from sacred trees in order to acquire knowledge, divine wisdom, and life. For the male God Jehovah to prevent this sacred communication and consumption would be both unnatural and sacrilegious (Eisler, 1987).

In order to instill a different set of values and beliefs, Eisler writes, the forming of patriarchy and its perpetuation have been dependent on telling

the Garden of Eden story in terms of Eve and her "disobedience." Eve's relationship to nature, to the serpent and the tree, was converted from a relationship of nature (natural) into an interpretation of the relationship as defiant and evil.

Nature and woman through this patriarchal version become symbolic of the origins of human imperfections and failings.

> If the men on top were to maintain their positions of dominance, there was one aspect of the earlier culture that could not be absorbed. The aspect or, more properly, complex of aspects was the sexually and socially equalitarian and peaceful core of the earlier partnership model of society. (Eisler, 1987, p. 90)

It became important for men to strip women of their decision-making powers. It become important to strip the Goddess and the priestesses of any spiritual authority. Women were removed from positions of power and responsibility as technology was being transformed from being techniques for the purpose of sustaining and supporting all life to techniques for the purpose of serving solely the needs of those in positions of control.

A new world was in order, a world order requiring that living entities be ranked in terms of power, value, respectfulness. The hierarchical ranks MAN - WOMAN - CHILD - ANIMALS - PLANTS were justified using the name of God, or of scientific thought that spoke of these rankings as natural, or that based this hierarchy on some other believed authority. Since the domination system has taken root, humans no longer look to one another to

look out for one another, nor do humans trust that problems will be worked out together. Instead of living in communities of aesthetic and spiritual meanings, humans came to live in a "dog-eat-dog" world, defining life as an endless fight for survival.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOPE OF LOVE IN THE BARREN LANDSCAPE OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

CHAPTER IV

THE HOPE OF LOVE IN THE BARREN LANDSCAPE OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE

When inwardness recognizes world-historical existence as the true subject of reflection and the place where it must risk its life, and when existence thereby becomes infused with all the values thought has projected in its long cultural development, the dialectical process is 'complete' in principle because subject has attained a self-conscious awareness that the dynamic which has shaped its previous development must now explicitly direct its future activity. (Davis, 1989, pp. 341-342)

We are living in the wastelands of a civilization founded on the domination model of relationship. This domination system is one in which minorities who both perceive themselves as more powerful than others and are perceived as so have made decisions for all of us, often times with little input from the lives of those affected by the decisions that are made. For all of the rhetoric of good intent that has been written and spoken in support of this domination system, repression rather than liberation prevails sexually, aesthetically, emotionally; devastation rather than creative sustenance continues as we live in the realities of poverty, homelessness, the continuing decimation of nature; and in general the quality of fear rather than courage dominates.

What is difficult to consider is where the root of the problems lie. Is it solely the domination system that has brought us to this point in our civilization? Would reverting to a partnership social order in which no group of people is ranked over the other and diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority resolve our problems? If a "partnership society" is preferable and such a shift even remotely possible, what kinds of changes would be necessary? What would this process of change entail?

Is a total change in the order of the social structure necessary or even possible, or are changes within existing structured patterns sufficient? Within the domination system, for example, if the "persons in power" educate toward love and compassion, would not a different cultural experience evolve than one in which hate, hostility, and resentment result? Yet, isn't it arguable that even if the intent of individuals is to support one another in communities of love and compassion, that if power-over others is the foundation of a society as it is in our domination system as described by Eisler, than necessarily valued will be a kind of strength that is aggressive, non-emotional, and controlling?

Within a domination system what is learned is both founded on and reinforcing of the belief that we are somehow incapable of working out within our communities what needs to be worked out. We seem convinced that we are incompetent if we depend on relationships to bring us to good choice so, therefore, we must depend on the authority of rule and mandate.

Perhaps we have believed in and acted as if this latter is true, that ethical result depends on legalistic cause, so much so that it has in fact become true.

Is There a Way Beyond Domination and Control?

Perhaps in our time we do act as if we are automatons incapable of ethically responding to one another unless threatened, coerced, excommunicated from belonging. It is the premise of this paper, however, that it is not the necessary destiny of an individual's life to be controlled and coerced or controlling and coercive. We are, in fact, capable of making just and creative decisions for ourselves when we live in contexts with one another in which democratic, humane, spiritual, and aesthetic understandings and meanings are encouraged.

In contexts of meaning, the forms out of which we live with one another evolve organically out of our daily relationships. Within these contexts of meaning we are allowed and educated to come to our own individual understandings of what justice, spiritual strength, aesthetic expression, physical well-being means in order to live in relationships of love and compassion with one another. As Rilke wrote, "in the depths all becomes law" (Rilke, 1934, p. 38). These contexts require a shift in how consciousness is understood, a shift from the idea of consciousness as a substantive entity to consciousness as related dialectically to our experiencing.

Because individual consciousness is inextricably interdependent on the contexts in which it is situated, the solutions to our social crises depend on

each of us demanding and creating contexts for one another that are supportive and just. Hocking's influence on Marcel's ideas about creative fidelity evolved out of Hocking's belief that it is the right of the individual to demand of her world that it justify her existence. In other words, our daily experiences ought, according to both Hocking and Marcel, make possible the realization of our existences in terms physically supportive (no one allowed to suffer with hunger, violently mistreated, etc.), spiritually nurturing, intellectually relevant, and emotionally affirming.

To know what it means for one's existence to be justified is not an easy ontological process nor a process in which one ever arrives at a final solution. To know what the justification of one's being-in-the-world means entails an ongoing rigorous intellectual process, not in the academic sense of intellectualizing, but rather in the phenomenological intellectual sense of simultaneously absorbing, reflecting, and interpreting experiencing. The individual's interpretations are understood as dialectically inclusive of the effects of others and the effects of one's own past experiencing "stored" as the emotional content of memory.

Knowing what justifies existence is never a once and for all decision nor can it ever be purely solipsistic. Consciousness about what justifies existence in any given moment is arrived at through an ongoing process having to do with how an individual has come to know herself (the passing of time) in relationship to how she is ever presently coming to know herself.

This coming to know, both in terms of past and present, is in ways always related to the particularized effects of the beliefs and meanings of others in our contexts. That we are profoundly influenced by one another is phenomenologically inescapable.

Over the past 3000 years, there has been a seeming desire to know and define our experiencing in terms static and unchanging. However, because we are subjects existing amidst constant internal and external phenomenological changes, to define existence as if an experience rather than in terms of ongoing experiencing is misleading and leads to gross misunderstandings about ourselves and one another.

Phenomenologically, every individual is an evolving physical, intellectual, and emotional being who gathers meaning through incessant interpretations of the different contexts she is experiencing. As uncomfortable as we may be with the flux of life both within and outside of ourselves, it is indisputable that we live in change. The individual subject defined as a stagnant entity may hold in discussions that language experience in disembodied terms, yet since experiencing is never in actuality disembodied, what is discussed in these instances is a delusion. In actuality, embodiment is unavoidable as is change and death, two inextricable aspects of being embodied.

In that existence is continuously evolving for every individual, a feeling that existence is being justified is dependent on contexts of

relationship that instruct, validate, and justify the multi-dimensions of the on-going phenomenon of experiencing. In this last part of this chapter, I will seek to describe these contexts of relationship.

Future Shock is Here

In our time, it seems difficult to believe and a pretense if believed that what we have done and lived, what we are doing and how we are living within our social contexts is encouraging the totality of the physical, mental, and spiritual human individual. Unless committed to an obstinate denial, it seems ludicrous to speak in public circles of success and evolutionary progress. A small percentage of us are "doing well" in any sense. The rest of us feel hungry and without intellectual foundation, or spiritually ungrounded, or lonely, emotionally abandoned, and overall afraid to admit that any of these deplorable conditions exist.

Though a large percentage of Americans when polled express discontent with the way in which this country is proceeding, there simultaneously seems to be a commitment to the idea that America is the land where dreams do come true. While there is discontent, there is also a pervasive commitment to the idea of a country alive and well and living. Romantic notions do die hard. Yet, the pretense that what is alive is more than one massive theater of the absurd is becoming more difficult. "Pro-lifers" killing in the service of life is just one example of how vital this theater of absurdity is and how confused we are.

Other ironies abound. Technology meant to provide time for leisure and relaxation between us has instead proliferated a more hectic work place (with FAXs, printers, computers) where more is demanded in less time and where human contact is diminished. Further, while technology is for the purpose of making our lives "better," it is due to technology that 350,000 New Yorkers lost their jobs last year, jobs now performed by automated computers. Technology in our homes has resulted in so much technological activity and noise that we fail to find one another.

There is the absurd way in which we are addressing (or not addressing) violence in our schools. The meetings between administrators, teachers, and parents take up questions about how to manage children with handguns, what to do about monitoring weapons in the schools. Why are we not all outraged that the progression, a questionable adjective in this context, of our society has taken us to the point where our children are armed, are dangerous, and are scared? Where should we look to find out how this has happened and how should we respond in ways that alter the underlying forces that have driven our children to violence?

In terms of the phenomenon of marriage, how are we thinking and acting about the data that indicates that 50% of marriages end in divorce? More than not, people can be heard to respond "isn't that a shame; what has happened to family values in this country?" Presently, there is a burgeoning backlash regarding divorce in response to a study showing the adverse effects

of divorce on children. One solution being proposed makes getting a divorce more difficult for people with children. What kind of a solution is this? It does not take too much imagination to envision the potential increase in domestic violence, alcoholism, deceitful marital affairs if attaining divorce becomes more difficult.

A more ethical substantial approach would be to examine the foundations of relationship in terms of what individuals are taught or not taught about loving. This statistic, that half of marriages end in divorce, is not surprising in light of how little experience any of us have with mature relationship, how little we know of the complexities of life shared side by side. Early in our lives, when we are old enough to think about anything as profound as loving, the sacred, profound, and complex aspects of love need to be exhibited, but usually mature love is absent in a child's world. So much could happen around family meals and within the classroom that teach of the multi-dimensions of loving and the challenges of sharing life.

Most of us have so little experience or knowledge of mature love when we walk down the aisle in protestant/catholic services professing marriage "till death do us part." In that we carry, in many instances, so little of existential self-knowledge within ourselves when we marry, it seems ludicrous that we are surprised by the divorce rate. In that we are in the collective cultural sense immature about loving, why is the divorce rate not 90%? In short, it seems that there are more profound questions to be asking

about marriage and relationship than how to legally make it more difficult for people to divorce.

The madness in the way we are approaching some of the dilemmas in our culture is prophesied in books such as Brave New World (Huxley, 1932), 1984 (Orwell, 1949), Future Shock (Toffler, 1970). In Brave New World, Huxley writes of the infiltration of technology into all aspects of human lives. In the technological society, all social problems have been solved and life is virtually painless, but meaningless. Human life begins in test tubes in Huxley's world's society and are classified for life according to intelligence. Alphas are brilliant and creative. Epsilons are stupid and relegated to the most base menial jobs. *Soma* is a panacea drug (Christianity without tears, morality in a bottle) that pacifies people constantly.

In his book, Huxley portrays the human need to control through technological means the vicissitudes of human existence and the tendency to seek escape from that not controllable. In relation to the addictive nature in present life and the technological advances that make it possible for people to live much of their lives in a virtual reality, Huxley appears prophetic (Huxley, 1932).

In 1984, any thought differing from that of the totalitarian system of the society described is renounced. Individuals are watched over by Big Brother and controlled by the Thought Police. Prophesized in Orwell's piece is the mass conformant consciousness we are in the midst of today. This tendency

towards conforming to external order and suspending our own particular questions and struggles in the suppression of our individual interpretations is driven by the same fear of experiencing experience found in Brave New World (Orwell, 1949).

Future Shock (1970), the title of his book, is a term Toffler coined to describe the stress that shatters and the disorientation induced in individuals when they are subjected to too much change in too short a time. The acceleration thrust breeds odd personalities, Toffler writes:

> Children who at twelve are no longer childlike; adults who at fifty are children of twelve. There are rich men who playact poverty, computer programmers who turn on with LSD. There are anarchists who, beneath their dirty denim shirts, are outrageous conformists, and conformists who, beneath their button-down collars, are outrageous anarchists. There are married priests and atheist ministers and Jewish Zen Buddhists. We are pop . . . and op . . . and art cinetique . . . There are Playboy Clubs and homosexual movie theaters . . . amphetamines and tranquilizers . . . anger, affluence, and oblivion. Much oblivion. (p. 10)

Too much stimuli, too much activity is often felt as a numb oblivion on the one hand and a feeling of disorientation on the other. The feeling of numbness and disorientation both, Toffler notes, are similar to the effects of culture shock when visiting a foreign culture and becoming overwhelmed by the differences in language, gestures, sounds, sights to which one is accustomed. Future shock, however, differs from culture shock in that there

is no time when the trip ends and one may return to a familiar world. There is no familiar world to which to return.

Toffler writes that people have referred to this period of future shock misleadingly as the "second industrial revolution." The changes of the latter part of this century, Toffler believes, are in all likelihood more important, profound, and more far-reaching than the changes brought about by the industrial revolution. In fact, some scholars call this period the second great divide in human history, the first great divide being the shift from a barbarian to a civilized world (Toffler, 1970).

Toffler quotes Kurt Marek, author of Gods, Graves, and Scholars:

> We, in the twentieth century, are concluding an era of mankind five thousand years in length . . . We are not, as Spengler supposed, in the situation of Rome at the beginning of the Christian West, but in that of the year 3000 B.C. We open our eyes like prehistoric man, we see a world totally new. (cited in Toffler, 1970, p. 13)

One factor that makes this period unique is the reversal of the relationship between humans and resources. To varying degrees, prior to the super-industrial technological era, resources limited our decisions. No longer. Today, it is human decisions that make and limit the resources. Vegetables and fruits are mass-produced in greenhouses, decisions are made to decimate trees so cattle can graze and be ultimately slaughtered and manufactured into beef. Decisions are made and technology accommodated to produce products

we previously depended on nature to produce. Often these decisions lead to a life ecologically out of balance.

What further distinguishes this time is the access that people worldwide have to information. The billions of people who have televisions can watch daily events happening all over the world. The rapidity with which the scenes are flashed across the screen and the devastation that is exhibited appear from its effects to be numbing rather than amazing. The scenes shown, the news reported, is most often too much and too fast to absorb, to feel and rarely is the news about the people who control us and how/why they do.

Perhaps, if our lives were not so obsessively accelerated, the information coming at us could be absorbed, felt, discussed between us. More than not, however, the information explosion seems not to encourage rumination and insightfulness but rather a reaction of numbness to the constant barrage of sights, sounds, and ideas. When Thomas Jefferson thought of access to knowledge as the core of democracy, he, I believe, had a different relationship to knowledge in mind than what feels to be a cultural mood of frenzied oblivion to our knowledge of one another.

People who are computer literate and who can afford computer hardware and software have access to information and communication networks that can be plugged into any time of the day or night. Several people I know have social lives that are primarily computer generated. In the

evening, they go "on line" to "communicate" with "other humans." There are "rooms" for feminists, sexists, S/M aficionados, Democrats, racists, African-Americans, singles, therapists, and any other imaginable group that come together to converse. A friend of mine decided to quit going in the room he had spent most of his evenings in because of the terse, caustic nature of the "people." According to him, there is often a fierce attitude expressed on-line that is more subdued or repressed when humans are physically present with one another.

If it is so, that on-line people have a blunt and harsh way different than how they are when physically present, this presents an interesting phenomenon to study. What happens during on-line "social interactions" and in the cyberspaces of the evolving virtual reality in terms of relationship? How individuals interact in these technological contexts can provide an interesting realm in which to study contextual relationship. The study of technologically generated relationship is beyond the scope of this chapter and yet certainly relevant enough to questions about presence and relationship that a digression into aspects of the present technological phenomena of on-line socializing and of virtual reality may be illuminating.

On-line socializing is like having a modern day communal pen-pal. People who have never met in physical presence, that is who have never seen nor heard one another, converse through the computerized written word. Unlike what happens when pen pals "converse" through the mail

over the passing of days, sometimes with interminable lapses, communication on-line is generally instantaneous and an available context for the participation of many. It is as if people who have never met get together nightly for conference phone conversations. Differing from the experience of conference calls is that the word is written rather than spoken.

In one sense, these technologized social hours represent the ultimate form of disembodiment. And yet, it is possible to imagine that if consciousness were lived as the embodiment of mind/body/soul rather than defined in disembodied categories, that meeting someone on-line solely through language would be similar to being physically present with her not in terms of what would be sensually possible in one another's physical presence but rather in terms of what could be known of another. In a consciousness of embodiment, our language would be indicative of who we are because our thoughts, concepts, logos would not be split off from how we live, from our experiencing.

In other words, the predominant cliché that holds today that actions rather than words are the only trustworthy indicators of who and how an individual interprets and lives in her situatedness is a result of disembodiment. The distinction between language and experience would be unnecessary if consciousness was lived as embodiment because language (mind) would be necessarily body/soul. In this sense, an individual's spoken and written language would be revelatory rather than potentially deceptive.

On-line socializing, in a culture of embodiment, would seem not abstract and remote as it can seem today to individuals who are concerned with embodied presence.

In the realm of virtual reality, once the technology evolves and becomes perfected and affordable, individuals will have access to the creation and experiencing of personalized movies that explore the fringes of one's imagination and exploit desires before they become repressed. The process of creating and acting in movies will no longer be limited to the expertise of people in the film and video industry.

Studies of the phenomenological process of the making of these individual virtual movies could result in a study of the phenomenon of consciousness. New insights might evolve, for example, about how flexible or inflexible consciousness is in terms of breaking bounds with the familiar.

For example, how constrained is imagination by that which is familiar? How bound is consciousness to internalized fears? If there are fears that exist solely because of cultural rules and regulations, seemingly these fears would dissolve in the experiencing of virtual reality. Or would they? Are there virtual fears? Can the external ever be separated from the internal or is what is instilled externally introjected in such a way that even when the external contexts are absent, the internalized effects of the world are present? Perhaps imagination can not transcend memory in any context.

Are the experiences within virtual reality visceral? Within virtual reality, are the time, space, contextual limitations of non-virtual reality binding? Virtual reality is a fertile context through which to live out all of these questions. Though technological relationship is not the focus of this paper, considering the possibilities and limitations of these more modern social contexts may be enlightening about the forces that act on our individual and collective existentiality, concerns central to this discussion.

Finally, and as a return to Toffler, it is the impact of the acceleration of change on the feeling life of individuals that Toffler says may be the most discerning factor of all of our time. The impermanent, transient nature of our lives penetrates, tinges, and stains our consciousness, affecting the ways we respond to one another, to objects, to ideas, art, and values. We no longer feel one another as we did in the past (Toffler, 1970).

Anti-existential Forces

In the cries of Huxley, Orwell, and Toffler who warned of totalitarian intelligence, technological overwhelm and escapism, numbness of feeling, and the notion that time was becoming accelerated, few seemingly heeded the calls to act against the prophecy. Perhaps the warnings have come too late. Perhaps the systems of spiritual and intellectual repression and the systems of devastation were and are too intact, perhaps too pervasive for profound change.

Or perhaps the cries could not penetrate the denial of what is humanely important. The few who have responded in this century to the warning that something is very wrong in how we are approaching our lives can be found in some of the grass roots groups over the last thirty years, in some of the sub and sub-sub communities, and in the perspective of certain particular individuals. Different systems of values have been from time to time proposed by the efforts of these individuals but have been propositions not yet pervasive enough to alter existing forms, patterns, and systems of interaction. Some of our sacred cows are still male corporate power, money, work (even if for minimum wage), and church-going.

Denied by many are the pains that grow out of living in the midst of these confusing forms. Abuse of the people working in a corporation is sometimes, for example, an aspect of male corporate power. The driving concern for money often blinds us to a more ethical and aesthetic concern while strengthening a tendency toward greed and manipulation. Work can fatigue and deplete one's identity, coerce people into doing things in which they don't believe and often for a paycheck that barely contributes to making ends meet. Finally, going to church, too many of us have learned, often has little to do with meeting God. Instead of spiritual enrichment, what sometimes results is an increase in snobbery, self-righteousness, and the acquisition of a language that solidifies support for existing social and cultural

forms. Why are we so readily coerced into ways of thinking and acting that support repression and denial of important existential moments?

When not mired in denial, awareness of our lives can lead us to be baffled and profoundly disturbed by what is happening in our personal and cultural contexts.

> January 7, 1993 She lands home at 5:48 P.M., jumps out of her work clothes and into something more comfortable . . . speedwalks her dog . . . rushes to her car, screeches out of her driveway and onto the street, accelerates to 63 mph . . . she almost rearends into a car at a stop light . . . perspiring from the anxiety of the rush, she thinks to herself how much she does not want to be late for her relaxation yoga class. *The rush to relax . . .*
>
> March 6, 1970 "You get as much respect as you demand," Mom said as she whisked my sister downstairs to lecture her for having let her boyfriend Jimmy kiss her. I learned that night about the risky business of the body. Respect . . . demand . . . respect . . . demand. Three days later, Sunday afternoon with Dad at his bachelor pad, a new one of his paintings on the wall. This painting was of his girlfriend Frankie, painted by Dad of her nude body, hung over his bed. Dad paints nude portraits of his girlfriend. Mom does not want me or my sisters to kiss our boyfriends. *Circuitous roads to sexuality . . .*
>
> March 5, 1993 "When I was 10, I thought I would be dead at 28," she said. "Now I'm 40 . . . 12 years after I thought I would suicide and I'm still here. And yet I still don't know why I have not ended my life. Tell me, damnit, why am I still here? Why? Be honest with me -- what do I have to dream about, to look forward to? 278 lbs., an alcoholic mother to take care of, addictions of my own to food, caffeine, nicotine." I look into the glaze of her eyes, the puffiness of her face, I who she is paying for an answer. All I can feel is the tremendous "ouch" in my heart and presence of my own tears in the face of her profound sorrow. *In that moment I really don't know the why . . .*
>
> April 10, 1987 Ronnie, ruddied complexion, thin to the bone, torn and tarred bluejeans hanging off of his thin hips, thinned cotton t-shirt, a

pair of blackened white keds on his feet. In for his fourth DWI, a mandatory class on alcoholism, a part of his 28-day program at the High Point Alcoholic Center.

Ronnie shows his punch card to the instructor, his evidence that he has attended his mandatory AA meetings. "Good Ronnie", she says. "Tonight we're going to talk about self-esteem . . . ", her voice begins its droning.

That liquid that poisons, kills close to 1,000,000 annually, that dangerous liquid was Ronnie's best and only friend.

Beaten by his own alcoholic father, a small-framed loser in school, not intelligent in academically recognizable ways, Ronnie got lost early on. No friends . . . no paternal nor maternal love . . . no sense of purpose. His first high on beer gave him sensations different from his life of pain and nothingness. When drunk, he even felt sexy, like a girl might want him.

"Point no. 2, self-esteem has to do with liking yourself . . . point no. 3 . . . "

I looked at Ronnie; his half-cocked eyes made it look like he was awake but he was zoned out . . . oblivious to her words, he appeared sick and tired of it all.

Though alcohol kills thousands, it appeared that at this moment his abstinence was killing him. Away from his best friend, he sat there oblivious, lost ("In my experience the yearning for the feeling of harmony in the womb is the most important cause of alcoholism or for that matter any form of addiction," Morris Berman writes in Coming to our senses, 1989, p. 27).

Let's suppose Ronnie does get sober, what then is our hope for him?

February 17, 1991 The quintessential democratic empire sends troops abroad to fight Saddam Hussein and yet so persistently denies efforts to mobilize forces for the purpose of righting wrongs here at home, wrongs fundamentally related to the realities of poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, the health care crisis, addictions of every imaginable type, spiritual vapidity, and existential isolation.

What are the underlying beliefs, fears, seductions that lend themselves to these kinds of choices?

These scenarios are emblematic of the confusions, pains, absurdities within our individual and collective consciousness.

A Language of Hope

What is required of us if we are to make different choices about how we live together in the 21st century? What are the most important and basic questions to raise? What are the basic challenges that we need to meet?

Twenty years after the death of Gabriel Marcel, we are faced with different questions than he was addressing in his middle and upper middle class context of France. Yet is not the passion that drives us to think about how we want to live together today and in 2000 the same passion that drove Marcel to study and write? Living in the midst of a world shattered by two world wars, the latter war a symbol of the progressive destructive capabilities in the hands of human beings, Marcel was frustrated by academic discussions that missed the point of the concrete challenges and actualities of the individual life.

Marcel sensed in the wake of the technological fever that the spiritual, intellectual, ethical life may be endangered if certain concerns were ignored. "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Marcel, 1952, p. ix). Marcel believed there to be an "infrangible sphere of being to which techniques are never able to gain access" (Marcel, 1952, p. 8).

Technologized materialism and technological communication take place within the collective consciousness of society, a collective consciousness that Marcel believes develops "below" where love and intelligence are possible. For Marcel, the education of the collective is impossible; what is possible is the education of the person. Because an individual's sense of herself is dependent on her ideas of herself and the ideas of those around her, when cultural and individual ideas exclude the existential and are consumed with the technological, so is the individual's sense of herself degraded from concerns about the concreteness of relationship, for example, to concerns of technique and mechanization.

Marcel believed the crisis of his day to be a metaphysical one. Two decades later, no doubt Marcel would still apply this belief of metaphysical crisis to our present world. He believed that no kind of social restructuring was sufficient to reverse the contemporary sense of disquiet, for the roots of the problem lay not in external forms but in the depths of being. It is out of these depths, or more correctly out of our dissociation from these depths, that we have allowed ourselves to structure techniques that degrade and divorce us from our existential spirits.

In Marcel's thinking, every kind of technical advance ought to be balanced by an effort at inwardness directed toward self-knowing. The difficulty is that the more involved we become with the facility of technique

whose "smooth functioning assures a tolerable life at the material level", the more estranged we become from an awareness of our inner reality.

> I should be tempted to say that the centre of gravity of a man and his balancing point tend to become external to himself: that he projects himself more and more into objects, into the various pieces of apparatus on which he depends for his existence. It would be no exaggeration to say that the more progress 'humanity' as an abstraction makes towards the mastery of nature, the more actual individual men tend to become slaves of this very conquest. (Marcel, 1952, pp. 55-56)

In and of themselves the products and processes of technology are not negative for the soul, according to Marcel. In fact, technological process Marcel believes to be a manifestation of a certain intelligibility of which we may be proud.

The problems Marcel foresaw had to do not with technology per se but rather with the way in which our relationships within ourselves and between us, founded on seeking security rather than meaning, has taken us to use technology for the efficacy of experience rather than to enrich the inwardness of existence. Technology, according to Marcel, does not necessarily have a dehumanizing effect but has come to because we have utilized technology to point our lives toward the quest for material security rather than toward a quest for what it means to be existentially human.

The aim of humans more often than not has been to use the technological to guarantee a certain sense of security and control over the unpredictable, which is to say a certain control over the flux of human life.

Facility, accuracy, and speed have become the driving technological concerns. Contemplation, wonder, and important inquiry have been relegated to the realm of the fanciful or the private philosophical. Marcel believes that when our preoccupation with security dominates mass society, as it does in our technological era, that the scope of human life is necessarily diminished.

> Life, as it were, tends to shrink back on itself, to wither. (Marcel, 1952, p. 59)
>
> A civilization which denies the place of contemplation and shuts out the possibility of contemplation sets us inevitably on the road towards a philosophy which is not so much a love of wisdom as a hatred of wisdom. (Marcel, 1952, p. 65)
>
> Technical man (if I may call him so), having in the deepest sense lost his awareness of himself - having lost, above all, that is, his awareness of the transcendental laws which allow him to guide his behavior and direct his intentions is <u>becoming more and more disarmed in the face of the powers of destruction unleashed around him and in the face, also, of the spirit of complicity which these powers encounter in the depths of his own nature.</u> (emphasis added) (Marcel, 1952, pp. 74-75)

Have we focused so intently on control and power over one another and have we been in the process so successful at developing technology rather than at the same time nurturing being that we are now doomed to live as accomplices of spiritual degradation and existential denial?

Throughout Marcel's works, he holds out hope that we can answer no to being such accomplices. As long as there is human life for Marcel, there is hope that the tendencies that incline us toward the degradation of being can be reversed. Because Marcel believed in an ontological spiritual foundation

to being, he held that no matter how slick and technological our lives become, that there is an uncrushable aspect of being that may always potentially surface to call the consciousness of humanity to itself. For Marcel's hope to be more than a pipedream, for sacred piety towards one another to be present rather than potential, what?

In Heidegger's work, "he exposes the ontological cover-up by which Being has successfully been obscured since Plato, but he fails to finger the culprit, to point to social forces which carried out the deed and political interests which oppose its reversal" (Stahl, 1979, p. 305). Whatever the forces of the culprit, it is easy to agree on the notion that western civilization is historically a story of ways in which humans have managed perhaps both intentionally and unintentionally to avoid being.

Amidst the remains of the broken forms of the patriarchal domination system, we are experiencing confusion, despair, and cynicism. If Heidegger is right and we have for 2500 years sought ways to avoid being, why change now? Or can we? Perhaps the success of civilization actually has to do with humans' dexterity and ingenuity for producing means to avoid the struggle of being. In this definition of success, we should rest on our laurels, for we have continued to excel in our abilities to materialize and mechanize our lives to the point where we exist in a close to complete robotized world. We have evolved the most imaginative and destructive means for not experiencing being.

In that avoidance and denial of individual existential inwardness has been continuously chosen, and given that our denial mechanisms have become more sophisticated as technology has progressed, should we once and for all surrender being to a soul-less doing and having? What stops us from making peace with the idea that we can not live in contexts more humane, more ethically correct, and more spiritually fortifying? If being is so scary and we have evolved into experts of avoidance, why don't we surrender to our numbness?

I believe that we can not surrender completely to our denial and numbness, at least not intentionally surrender, because to do so is to give up on being human. Though in so many ways, we have given up on one another and though we have done so willingly in many situations, I don't think we have done so happily nor peacefully nor hopefully.

Vapid as some of our lives may be, there is still a hunger for gentle, loving human relationship. Empty as some of our spirits may feel, there is still the surprising moment when music sounds certain tones that remind us that we do feel. Hollow as our commitments may seem, there is still a need to believe in somebody, in some idea, in some hope. Materialistic and greed-driven as our lives may be, there is still a presence in a cathedral that can awe us with a sense that there is something different and perhaps more meaningful than making money.

Hard as we may run from ourselves and from one another, within consciousness is a persistent force that surfaces from time to time to remind us that a fundamental part of being human is the seeking of what it is to be. We may run but we can not ultimately hide. That we avoid being shouts at us whenever the news announces another murder at the hands of a child. Our children are murdering, selling drugs, being violent in ways far surpassing what we have known before.

We are losing at our hiding games. If something is not done on both an individual and a collective scale to recover being, we might as well give up surrendering the totality of our lives to violence, addiction, and virtual worlds that preclude actuality.

The esprit of being is not present in megabytes, on computer screens, in televised images. Rather, becoming being has to do with meeting the felt-dimension of the inwardness of existence. It is through contexts of meaning between individuals that this inwardness of feeling is encouraged. In these contexts, individuals attend to the underlying forces vital to living in a creative, ethical, communal way with one another.

In contexts of meaning, individuals feel relationship as existential companionship. Honest truths are spoken, difficult dilemmas trudged through in processes of dignity and respect. Visceral feelings are not denied nor minimized rather are valued for the interpretations they provide of each of our particular existentiality.

Being is present in the in-between of subject and world when there is openness and receptivity in the subject who is in the world. What is present when being is is not a utopian presence nor a metaphysical abstract entity but rather is related to the meeting of the subject and the world in particularized contexts. If the moment of the context is one of joy, there may be celebration. If the moment is one of death, there may be loss and immense sadness. If the moment is one of deceit, there may be a dizzying confusion and disorientation. Being is always in flux because the subject and the world of being are in flux.

The Education of Being

It has been the premise of this paper that meaning unfolds in relationship to one another. Though we are each of us solitary, we are also always in relationship to our worlds inhabited by one another. Each of our own particular and ongoing interpretations of our situations are not arrived at through hermeneutic processes encased within the confines of our own inwardness but rather our interpretations are in some sense always conversations within ourselves in relationship to conversations with one another.

The systems of thought in which we have grounded our educational system are founded on the spirit of abstraction referred to throughout this paper and/or on the scientific worldview of matter. One of the primary reasons that the being of being human is foreign to our experiencing is that

we are taught to come to the world through abstraction and/or through scientific formula. Being, in its existential meaning, is not met through the discussion of ideals abstracted from individual experiencing nor through scientific equations.

A radical change in the foundations on which we build education is needed if we are to learn to revere and appreciate what it means to be human. To talk educationally about what these changes would entail means to find a language through which to talk to one another about being. What is? What does "to be" mean? Who is competent or impelled to raise questions about what is?

In some sense, the tradition of western philosophy over the past 2500 years has taken on the task of languaging and living out these questions. Because so much has been written about being within the philosophical tradition, studying philosophy is an important intellectual dimension to making questions of being present educationally.

However, studying the ontological traditions, while important, is not sufficient in our educational commitment to being. As has been discussed, much of the western tradition has defined being in terms substantive and universally abstract, transforming being into something that can be studied as separated from experiencing and therefore outside of temporal existence. As has been reiterated in terms of the passion of Marcel's work as well as in the

preferences contained about the existential phenomenological foundations of being, being has to do with the radical immersion of the subject in the world.

Understanding the traditions that we are born into is important in terms of understanding the evolution of western consciousness but if we are to know our own being, the philosophers most critical to study educationally are those who thought of being in terms of the dialectical relationship between the subject and the world. Aspects of the work of Plato, Hegel, and Goethe fall into this dialectical category of being as does the work of existential phenomenologists.

Fundamental to the work of existentialists are questions about the meaning of <u>being</u> human. Fundamental to phenomenology is the unfolding of a methodical process through which to get at this meaning. Because the phenomenological method is a process of unfolding meanings of being, it would be transformative for our schools to be based on the phenomenological method rather than on the goal-oriented economic method. A succinct way to differentiate between these educational methods is that the former seeks to see how it is that one sees while the latter seeks to know how one can best be used.

If we awakened tomorrow to a world in which it was decided that our schools would be transformed to be phenomenological in method, what kind of knowledge would educators need in order for them to succeed in this transformation? Primarily what would be needed is an understanding of

knowledge as based on ontological and methodological principles that ground being in experience. What would be understood out of this is that in order to know being, our children must know how it is they are experiencing their own experience.

Education would become a context through which to teach that what is primary to ontology is the dialectic between individual and world. To teach this dialectic is to lay the foundations for lives built on creative fidelity because it speaks to the ongoing relationship between an individual and her world, a relationship continuously mediated by context and mood. Our children if taught to think and live phenomenologically would be taught to understand change and instability as qualities not to be avoided but as qualities underlying being human.

In the sense that our lives are always changing, our children would be taught to embrace loss and confusion as signs that their lives are vital and dynamic. The pain that comes from having to continuously expand and let go of previously held truths would be recognized as an integral part of the process of being.

> Self-consciousness is not a fixed form existing prior to experience. Its universality depends, rather, on the ability to constitute itself in experience by constantly transcending its previous forms. Its universality is existential and historical rather than a priori and essentialistic . . . every property of 'the human mind' is thoroughly historical. (Davis, 1989, p. 345)

In that to be means to be always transcending previous forms, experiencing being has a tragic dimension (of loss).

The dialectical logic is a logic of tragic drama, a logic of tragic interrogation and tragic growth. "Engaging in life can be a deeply disturbing and painful process for it demands that we constantly engage and then remake ourselves" (Davis, 1989, p. 335). It is one of the most telling symptoms of the insane dimension of our culture that we teach our children to hide pain, to be ashamed of hurting, to deny feelings of loss.

It is absurd that many individuals in our culture who refuse to learn to shut off their pain end up in "insane" asylums, one of the few contexts in our culture where it is considered "normal" to exhibit pain, and yet even there we use drugs to "shield" people from their pain. Perhaps a visit to these asylums would give us an idea of the vitality that ought be allowed in the classroom. When education deadens being, individuals who refuse to kill being within themselves are often relegated to the fringes of society in one sense or another unless by chance, grace, or brilliance they find voice and courage to make a place to challenge the status quo in such a way that the social context is altered.

> More often than not, both in life and in philosophy, attitudes consume themselves in resisting the tragic. Doing so, they end in impoverishment or, its philosophic equivalent, the spirit of abstraction. Ceaseless obsessional reiteration of stereotypes cancels any movement toward new possibilities. Tragedy remains the deferred self-knowledge underlying such practices. Ill will toward suffering is the essential

> barrier both to life and to authentic thinking. (emphasis added) (Davis, 1989, p. 339)

Imagine the different contexts of meaning within our educational system if educators, parents, and administrators based educational relationship on the notion that when we avoid suffering, we construct barriers to life and authentic thinking.

Educating towards ethical lives of meaning seems dependent on setting educational contexts where we are attentive, deeply attentive, to one another in conversations that rigorously seek to get at what it means to be human or a human. Within these conversations, conflict is not resolved; it is met. The conflict that develops is based on the concrete dilemmas of our different desires, needs, opinions. The purpose is not the dissolution of difference but rather the construction of contexts in which lives are engaged with integrity.

What are the connections between us? What are the differences? How can our relationships toward one another unfold in ways that justify each of our individual existences? A primary intention of rigorous and difficult conversations where these questions are lived out, where we plow together through our ideas and feelings, is to educate individuals to be resistant to cultural, social, and personal forces that dissolve the soul of being.

Too often our classes are not devoted to the study of what it means to be attentive and devoted to being with one another in relationships of freedom and responsibility. Rather, what is taught is how to live with rules, that is,

how to be submissive to rules, rebellious against rules, or to live somewhere between being submissive and rebellious. The unfortunate focus becomes living with rules rather than with one another.

For our children to know themselves ethically, central to education must be a concept of each life as sacred, particular, and primarily in need of the receptivity of other human beings. What is taught is the importance of receiving one another as presence.

> When I say that a being is granted to me as a presence or as a being (it comes to the same, for he is not a being for me unless he is a presence), this means that I am unable to treat him as if he were merely placed in front of me; between him and me there arises a relationship which, in a sense, surpasses my awareness of him; he is not only before me, he is also within me - or, rather, these categories are transcended, they no longer have any meaning. (Marcel, 1956a, p. 38)

> Great is the temptation to think of this presence as an object but this is the side of the problematical. Against this belief, fidelity raises up its voice 'Even if I cannot see you, if I cannot touch you, I feel that you are with me; it would be a denial of you not to be assured of this.' (Marcel, 1956a, p. 39)

The world of being, the world of persons, is a world where cause, necessity, and determinism give way to free participation.

The lack of cause, necessity, and determinism in contexts of being is eloquently expressed by the silence which follows the question "why do you love her?" Any answer is inadequate to the visceral and complex moment of really loving another. If we are always planning lessons, planning away our

lives, the deepest meanings held in the silence of our profound experiencing will not evolve.

In many ways, what Marcel stresses in his concept of creative fidelity is a definition of being that can not be grasped unless one knows love. The meaning of love as it is intended here is found in the works of Rainer Maria Rilke, a man to whom Marcel was deeply devoted. In the descriptions of love that Rilke extended, persons are loved as if evolving questions. To love in the Rilkean sense is not to hold one to definitive static ways; no, not at all, rather it is to profoundly encourage individuals in the most thorough way possible to live out their particular questions. In this sense, through love, we become the guardian of being for one another.

Rilke (1934) writes:

> To love is good, too: love being difficult. For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation. For this reason young people, who are beginners in everything, cannot yet know love: they have to learn it. With their whole being, with all their forces, gathered close about their lonely, timid, upward-beating heart, they must learn to love. . . . Love is at first not anything that means merging, giving over, and uniting with another (for what would a union be of something unclarified and unfinished, still subordinate -?), it is a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself for another's sake, it is a great exacting claim upon him, something that chooses him out and calls him to vast things. Only in this sense, as the task of working at themselves ('to hearken and to hammer day and night'), might young people use the love that is given them. (pp. 53-54)

Perhaps it is one of the most poignant failings of our educational contexts, both within our homes and within our schools, that we are taught so little of love in this sense.

The Creative Fidelity of Love

In living the love of creative fidelity, life is affirmed in its complexities. The joyful, lighthearted moments are celebrated, the confusing times of fear and trembling are embraced. The darker sides of life having to do with emotions we are taught to be ashamed of and to negate like jealousy, hate, and terror are accepted. In this love, our being is guarded by our loved ones. In the literal and metaphorical sense, we are held.

Life is hard. And it is complicated. We may choose to hide away from life's vicissitudes and complexities or we may choose to be present in all of it. In presence, we are clear at times about what it is that is happening in our worlds. At times we are baffled. In times we act compassionately; at times blinded and ignore-ant. What love allows in these latter times is a place to scream, cry, and seek understanding for what it is that is happening.

Life is not encountered when we are afraid of our fear, afraid of our confusions, afraid of the hurt that comes with loss. When the fear is not accepted as part of living in our multifaceted and faceted existences, we fear the fear, hiding in numbness from the terror and everything else that we are afraid of.

We need one another to say "come out; your struggle is real; here you are loved and can love as you are, who you are with your confusions and questions." There is tremendous love in the statement "tell me more" . . . about your thoughts, feelings, dreams, nightmares. Tell me what it is you have been afraid to say, what it is that you have said before and been ridiculed for saying, or what you have been silenced because of, or hurt as a result of. Tell me you.

There is the deepest love when we hold the immenseness of one another's lives. That human life is comprised of both body and spirit creates a tension of understanding. There are probably moments when reason and desire within each of us have mutual intentions yet more often there are contradictions within us at most given moments, pulls from different aspects of our desires and from the different dimensions of our rational beliefs. There is angst, fear, and tremendous loneliness when we realize the many facets of our inwardness in relationship to the world that is before us. At these times what is needed more than probably anything is someone who understands us and holds us with all of our contradictions, complexities, and our desires to be loved and to love.

From my perspective, this kind of embracing, accepting love is inspiring. And when we are loved in this way we are in-spirited with the vitality and life of our own uniqueness, of our existence. This love in-spirits

us to labor, to create, to write, to contemplate, to dialogue, and to care for human life.

Because life is encouraged in this love, more is felt. Greater feeling is greater joy and greater sorrow. The love of which I speak provides a place to laugh and cry. Feminist theologian Nelle Morton writes of people hearing one another into speech. Heidegger says we speak ourselves into reality. Similarly, through this essential love, people love one another into being.

We have few contexts within our society through which we embrace the actuality of being body and spirit. We do not generally respond to one another in ways that reflect a perception of life as both. We do not, for example, think of one another in our work contexts as persons with spirit nor do we think of ourselves when and if we exercise as having soul. When we pray, often absent is a consciousness of our bodies.

In his book The Last Temptation of Christ (1960), Nikos Kazantzakis writes:

> The dual substance of Christ - the yearning, so human, so superhuman, of man to attain to God or, more exactly, to return to God and to identify himself with him - has always been a deep and inscrutable mystery to me. This nostalgia for God, at once so mysterious and so real, has opened in me large wounds and also large flowing springs.
>
> My principal anguish and the source of all my joys and sorrows from my youth onward has been the incessant, merciless battle between the spirit and the flesh. . . . my soul is the arena where these two armies have clashed and met.
>
> The anguish has been intense. I loved my body and did not want it to perish; I loved my soul and did not want it to decay. I have fought to reconcile these two primordial forces which are so contrary to each

> other, to make them realize that they are not enemies but, rather, fellow workers, so that they might rejoice in their harmony - and so that I might rejoice with them. (p. 1)

It is an incessant and merciless battle in large part, this battle between the spirit and the flesh, and it ensues whether or not we attend to it. Each of us is born onto this metaphysical battlefield. When I feel the texture of this battle within myself and I know that it must be within those I love, the word mercy comes to mind.

To be loving and to accept love we must have mercy on ourselves. This mercy toward the tensions, confusions, contradictions of desires within enables us to speak honestly to one another about our experiencing. Too late, if at all in our lives, we come to learn of creative fidelity. Most generally, we know how not to be close. Too often, we are deceitful. We learn to hide important pieces from one another of what we are doing and what we are feeling. It is no wonder that relationships die of dispassionate dullness. There is no panacea for the longevity of relationship, nor probably ought there be. What is needed is experiences between us that enlighten of the truths and complexities of sharing human existence.

> Existential love, in the measure that it is extended in time, cannot be the peaceful *éclat* of two souls, the one shining in the light of the other. At best this would be but an uncomprehending debauchery of feeling concealing the reality which lies behind. Existential love implies an ardent and mutual questioning. (Marcel, 1964, pp. 248-249)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barrett, W. (1958). Irrational man: A study in existential philosophy. New York: Doubleday.

Bergson, H. (1984). Creative evolution (A. Mitchell, Trans.). Lanham, MD: University Press of America. (Original work published 1906)

Berman, M. (1989). Coming to our senses. New York: Bantam Books.

Bollnow, O. (1969). Marcel's concept of availability. In P. A. Schilpp & L. E. Hahn (Eds.), The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. (1984). (pp. 177-199). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Briggs, J., & Peat, D. (1984). Looking glass universe: The emerging science of wholeness. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Cain, S. (1963). Gabriel Marcel. New York: Hillary House Publications.

Cioran, E. (1971). Gabriel Marcel: Notes for a character sketch. In P. A. Schilpp & L. E. Hahn (Eds.), The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. (1984). (pp. 71-79). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Cooper, D. (1990). Existentialism. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.

Davis, W. (1989). Inwardness and existence: Subjectivity in/and Hegel, Heidegger, Marx, and Freud. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Eisler, R. (1987). The chalice and the blade: Our history, our future. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

French, M. (1985). Beyond power: On women, men, and morals. New York: Ballantine Books.

Gruen, A. (1992). The insanity of normality: Realism as sickness, toward understanding human destructiveness. (H. Hannum & H. Hannum, Trans.). New York: Grove Press. (Original work published 1987)

Hegel, G. (1967). The phenomenology of mind (J. Baillie, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row. (Original work published 1807)

Hocking, W. (1912). The meaning of God in human experience: A philosophic study of religion. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

The holy bible. (1970). King James Version. Camden, NJ: Thomas Nelson Inc.

Huxley, A. (1932). Brave new world. New York: Doubleday.

James, W. (1961). The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature. New York: Macmillan. (Original lectures 1901)

Kant, I. (1929). Critique of pure reason (N. Kemp, Trans.). London: Macmillan. (Original work published 1787)

Kaufmann, W. (1976). Religions in four dimensions: Existential, aesthetic, historical, comparative. New York: Reader's Digest Press.

Kazantzakis, N. (1960). The last temptation of Christ (P. Bien, Trans.). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kierkegaard, S. (1962). The present age and of the difference between a genius and an apostle (A. Dru, Trans.). New York: Harper & Row.

Kingston, T. (1961). French existentialism: A Christian critique. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Küng, H. (1991). Does God exist? An answer for today (E. Quinn, Trans.). New York: Crossroad. (Original work published 1978)

Lechner, R. (1974). Marcel as radical empiricist. In P. A. Schilpp & L. E. Hahn (Eds.), The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. (1984). (pp. 457-469). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Marcel, G. (1918). The rebellious heart (F. O'Hara, Trans.). In F. J. Lescoe (Ed.), The existentialist drama of Gabriel Marcel. (1974). (pp. 145-215). West Hartford, CT: The McAuley Institute of Religious Studies.

Marcel, G. (1925). A man of God (M. Gabain, Trans.). In Gabriel Marcel: 3 plays. (1965a). (pp. 35-114). New York: Hill and Wang.

Marcel, G. (1932). The broken world (J. Colla, Trans.). In F. J. Lescoe (Ed.), The existentialist drama of Gabriel Marcel. (1974). (pp. 19-144). West Hartford, CT: The McAuley Institute of Religious Studies.

Marcel, G. (1936). Ariadne (R. Heywood, Trans.). In Gabriel Marcel: 3 plays. (1965a). (pp. 115-224). New York: Hill and Wang.

Marcel, G. (1950). The mystery of being: Vol. 1. Reflection and mystery (G. Fraser, Trans.). Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

Marcel, G. (1952). Man against mass society (G. Fraser, Trans.). Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

Marcel, G. (1952a). Metaphysical journal (B. Wall, Trans.). Chicago: Henry Regnery Co. (Original work published 1927)

Marcel, G. (1955). The decline of wisdom. New York: Philosophical Library.

Marcel, G. (1956). Royce's metaphysics (V. Ringer & G. Ringer, Trans.). Chicago: Henry Regnery Co. (Original work published 1910)

Marcel, G. (1956a). The philosophy of existentialism. (M. Harari, Trans.). New York: The Citadel Press.

Marcel, G. (1962). Homo viator: an introduction to a metaphysic of hope (E. Craufurd, Trans.). New York: Harper Torchbooks.

Marcel, G. (1963). The existential background of human dignity. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Marcel, G. (1964). Creative fidelity (R. Rosthal, Trans.). New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Original work published 1940)

Marcel, G. (1965). Being and having: An existentialist diary. New York: Harper Torchbooks.

Marcel, G. (1969). My autobiographical essay (F. Williams, Trans.). In P.A. Schilpp & L.E. Hahn (Eds.), The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. (1984). (pp. 1-68). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Marcel, G. (1973). Tragic wisdom and beyond (S. Jolin & P. McCormick, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Morris, B. (1993, March 16). Reader argues rights of gays, lesbians. Greensboro News & Record, p. B1.

Orwell, G. (1949). 1984. New York: Harcourt, Brace.

Percy, W. (1954). The message in the bottle: How queer man is, how queer language is, and what one has to do with the other. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Prini, P. (1969). A methodology of the unverifiable. In P. A. Schilpp & L. E. Hahn (Eds.), The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel (1984). (pp. 205-239). La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Reich, W. (1950). Children of the future: On the prevention of sexual pathology. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Rilke, R. (1934). Letters to a young poet. New York: W. W. Norton.

Royce, J. (1919). Lectures on modern idealism. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Schilpp, P., & Hahn, L. (1984). The philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. La Salle, IL: Open Court.

Schopenhauer, A. (1958). The world as will and representation (E. Payne, Trans.). New York: Dover Publications. (Original work published 1818)

Schwartz, D. (1948). The ego is always at the wheel, bagatelles. New York: New Directions Books.

Smith, Q. (1986). The felt meaning of the world: A metaphysic of feeling. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Stahl, G. (1979). Attuned to Being: Heideggerian music in technological society. In W. Spanos (Ed.), Martin Heidegger and the question of literature: Toward a postmodern literary hermeneutics (pp. 297-324). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Stephens, J. (1988). The finest music. In P. Janeczko (Ed.), The music of what happens: Poems that tell stories (p. ix). New York: Orchard Books.

Toffler, A. (1970). Future shock. New York: Bantam Books.