

# GABRIEL MARCEL'S BODY-AS-A-SUBJECT: A PREEMINENTLY POSTMODERN NOTION

There are a number of reasons why Gabriel Marcel can be called an avantgarde postmodernist. The first is his strong reaction against what Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon have called "modernism's universalizing and totalizing drive"<sup>1</sup> such as Descartes' use of the thinking ego as the sole foundation of his philosophy, or idealism's search for intelligibility exclusively through the rational. The second is his emphasis on the experiential, the individual and the existential, as opposed to modernism's stress on the abstract, the general and the essential. The third is his resistance to the encapsulization of his thoughts into a system, which has led to a liberating and empowering openness which is definitely postmodern in flavor. The fourth is his "double coding", that is his valuing of reflection simultaneously with postmodernist narratological methods, such as dramatization in essays and/or journals, and his ongoing use of dramatic creations. But, as we shall see, it is his notion of the body-as-a-subject, which incorporates the four above reasons, as well as adding to them those of sensualism and alterity, which is preeminently postmodern.

There is no doubt that Marcel's thought owes its impetus to its original reaction to Cartesianism and to idealism. This reaction reverberates throughout his *Metaphysical Journal*, as well as informing all his later works. In both Cartesianism and idealism, it is the loss of existence which he bemoans. He explains in the *Journal* that the existence of the Cartesian thinking ego is of a totally different order than the existence about which he himself is speaking. The objective world of the cogito simply does not coincide with "the world

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Natoli and Linda Hutcheon, eds., *A Postmodern Reader* (NY: SUNY Pr., 1993) p. IX.

of existence"<sup>2</sup>. For, the cogito guarantees the validity of a certain system of affirmations, and the real world would be immanent in it only if the valid and the real could be equated, which of course they cannot (MJ 325).

As for the idealists, they reduce "to a minimum the role of existence" (MJ 319). They carry out the reduction of existence in order to reach intelligibility through rational definitions. They prop up thought on existence, but then quickly lose sight of existence. They emphasize the "objective" quality of the object, so that the "subject" can have a grip on it, and thus leave behind "the existential aspect" of the object (MJ 319). And, since the contribution of the "object" is in fact unthinkable, idealism minimizes it. Thus, the individual characteristics of the "object" are more and more ignored, and it becomes "disindividualized". Moreover, sensation/feeling is also unintelligible in itself and is therefore looked at by idealism as a "priming" for the act of thinking about the object (MJ 327).<sup>3</sup>

In fact, idealism follows to its limit the natural bent of the mind, which is to create an insularity between the object and itself. What it does is to set aside the way in which the object is present to or affects the person considering it, or "the mysterious power of self-affirmation" of the object. It thus "conjures away" the sense presence of self-affirmation of the thing (MJ 320). It does what science does, which is to cut off the cables which link thought to experience. It forgets the irreducible element of experience. There is thus a very wide gulf between its way of thinking and the "integral human experience with its life which trembles with tragedy" (MJ 122).

The distinction between existence and objectivity which Gabriel Marcel articulated increasingly clearly throughout part II of the

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<sup>2</sup>Gabriel Marcel, *Metaphysical Journal*, tr. Bernard Wall, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952) Hereafter MJ.

<sup>3</sup>I must point out here that, probably to show the link which exists in French between "sensation" and "sentir" (in English "sensation" and "feeling") and which Marcel sometimes uses interchangeably, the translator Bernard Wall has translated the French "la sensation" (cf. *Journal Métaphysique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1935, p. 317), which appears twice on that page, the first time as "feeling or sensation," and the second as "sensation or feeling".

*Metaphysical Journal*, and which he clinched in an article called "Existence and Objectivity" published in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* in 1925, and reproduced as an appendix to the *Journal*, captures the essence of his reaction to both Cartesian rationalism and idealism, and throws light on the direction of all his future thought.

Objectivity consists in the characteristics of a person or thing, or of my body in which I play no part whatsoever. It is that which does not take me into account, that which has nothing to do with me (MJ 332-334). Thus it is a distancing from my body, from the world, and in fact from existence such as it is carried out by rationalists who effect a mind/body dichotomy in order to reach indubitability, by idealists who effect a separation between consciousness and reality in order to reach pure intelligibility, and by me in my daily life as I treat the world and others and even myself as "shes", "hims" or "theys".

Yet, ontologically, it is existence which has a absolute priority. Deep within myself I have an assurance which gives me "beyond all possible doubt... the confused and global experience of the world inasmuch as it is existent" (MJ 322). It is a certain intimation of the indissoluble unity of existence and the existent. It confronts me with the fact that "existential assurance is a pure immediacy which is incapable of being mediated. It is also incapable of specifications (it is not this or that), or of any characteristics (MJ 329).

In opposition to objectivity, existence very much takes my body into account. Basically, it is the presence of the world and of things to me which my body reaches via feeling. There are three most important (yet almost unexpected) terms in this definition: "presence", "my body" and "feeling". But it is "my body", to which the other two are intimately related, which is the crucial one, and on which existence hinges.

When Gabriel Marcel says "my body", he is speaking of course about the body which *I am*, not the body which (according to rationalism, idealism, science and common sense) *I have*. The latter body can be used in all sorts of ways, notably as an instrument for receiving messages from the world. That I am my body means that I am a subject in my own right - and not an object. Being a subject connotes an indecomposable unity, or a felt unity formed by me and

my body<sup>4</sup>. This means that the body-as-a-subject is unthinkable. Since thought separates the subject from the object of thought, if I think my body, it becomes an object and ceases to exist as such (MJ 275)<sup>5</sup>.

It is not until the *Mystery of Being*, in 1950, that Gabriel Marcel used the term "body-as-a-subject" to denote the fact that "I am my body", instead of or besides "incarnation" which he had used until then. In the *Entretiens autour de Gabriel Marcel*, he also refers to the distinction made by the German language between *Körper* and *Lieb*, *Körper* being the body as manipulable or the body as object, and *Lieb* being the body-as-a-subject, or a presence which is created "as we go on living in a way which is immanent to the body-as-object"<sup>6</sup>. There, Gabriel Marcel commented that it is the body-as-a-subject which is susceptible of surviving the body-as-object, and to whom resurrection is promised<sup>7</sup>.

Simultaneously, when my body is a subject, reality ceases to be a collection of objects outside me and becomes a presence, in fact we can say, a subject is its own right. For, as Gabriel Marcel writes in the *Metaphysical Journal*, "the world exists in the measure in which I have relations with it which are of the same type as my relations with my body, that is inasmuch as I am incarnate (MJ 269 and again 274). Later on, he makes the connection between the existence of my body and that of the world even tighter, saying that things exist in the measure in which they are prolongations of my body (MJ 281), or inasmuch as they are of the same nature as my body and belong to the same world (MJ 315). His argument is that my body is a prototype of existence, or inversely, that every existent is a prototype of my body.

But, if things are prolongations of my body, it is obvious that the instrumentalist view of sensations according to which my body is

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<sup>4</sup>Gabriel Marcel, *Etre et Avoir* (Paris: Aubier, 1935) p. 15.

<sup>5</sup>But Marcel insists that before it can be looked at as an object, it must first of all have been felt as my body.

<sup>6</sup>Gabriel Marcel' *Entretiens autour de Gabriel Marcel*, (La Baconnière: Neuchatel,) p. 386.

<sup>7</sup>Loc. cit.

looked upon as an instrument, and sensation is a message transmitted by the body, cannot be correct. For, in that case, sensation becomes a barrier which separates the two entities, the world and my body, which originally existed together (ontologically speaking). In his *Presence de Gabriel Marcel* paper on Gabriel Marcel's methodology of the body-as-a-subject, at the Sorbonne in 1993, Paul Ricoeur called the instrumentalist notion of sensation "the second knot which ties up existence"<sup>8</sup>. According to Ricoeur, Gabriel Marcel's untying of that knot - which strangles the access to real sensation/feeling - is an act of deconstruction<sup>9</sup>.

That act of deconstruction reveals to us the intimate relationship which exists in reality between my body-as-a-subject and sensation/feeling. Gabriel Marcel emphasizes that relationship time and again. "My body is mine inasmuch as, however confusedly, it is felt" (MJ 241), he writes, and throughout the *Journal* and repeatedly in later works such as *Creative Fidelity*, he insists that there can be a body only when someone is feeling (MJ 270)<sup>10</sup>. And when, with G. Marcel, we leave behind our instrumentalist view of sensation, feeling and sensation actually become siamese twins. For, sensation is feeling, of a very creative kind. As Marcel says powerfully: "Sensation (=the fact of feeling, of participating in the universe which creates me by affecting me)" (MJ 338).

David Applebaum does not appreciate this view of sensation. He accuses Marcel of confusing feeling and sensation. "Some of Marcel's basic works flounders on an ambiguity in the notion of

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<sup>8</sup>The first knot which we have to untie is objectivity which ties up existence.

<sup>9</sup>Paul Ricoeur "La Méthodologie du Corps-Sujet chez Gabriel Marcel". Round table on the Corps-Sujet, Association Présence de Gabriel Marcel meeting, Dec. 4, 1993.

<sup>10</sup>Gabriel Marcel, *Creative Fidelity*, tr. Robert Rosthal, (NY: Farrar, Straus & Co., 1964).

feeling"<sup>11</sup>, he writes. What concerns him is that, for Gabriel Marcel, sensation is pregnant with affectivity. For a logical, empirical mind like that of Applebaum, this is a major mistake. He is obviously not aware of all that Marcel's distinction between existence and objectivity, between sensation "as a manner of being" and sensation as a reference, entails (MJ 187). If Appelbaum were so aware, he would have realized that it is only from the point of view of objectivity that there is an ambiguity between Marcel's notions of sensation and of feeling. Neither does he seem to have read the passage in the *Metaphysical Journal* in which Gabriel Marcel clearly spells out that "sensation is affection, not information" (MJ 187).

According to Applebaum's materialistic interpretation of the body-as-a-subject, what Gabriel Marcel would have reached had he "disambiguated" about sensation and feeling, is the notion of "sensing" or body consciousness, which is the ability to touch the body from inside. He writes: "sensing supposes a build-up of attention to the point that cotangible touch with the interior of the body is attained"<sup>12</sup>. According to him, it is through this "sensing" that I am able to acquire the intimacy with another which allows me to call him a "thou"! His interpretation of sensation is obviously not in accordance with Marcel's, which is the foundation for an ethics as well as a philosophy of transcendence, both strongly based on feeling and emotions.

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<sup>11</sup>David Appelbaum "On Confusing Feeling with Sensation, with Special Reference to the Problem of Intimacy". *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française*, Vol. V, No 2-3, Fall 1993, p. 26.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. p. 17. Had Applebaum studied the original French text, *Journal Métaphysique*, his criticism of Marcel might have been revised. For, in French, there exists a correlation between "sensation" and "sentir", which does not exist in the corresponding English terms "sensation" and "feeling". But the translator Bernard Wall, whose translation is otherwise excellent, has made one small error, translating the term "sensible" (used only once by Marcel) as "sensed", whereas it should have been "feelable". And Appelbaum has appropriated this mistranslation and used it for his own purposes, using, that is, the term "sensed" or "sensing" instead of "feeling", wherever Marcel had written "sentir".

What Appelbaum ignores completely is the fact that essential to Marcel's "sensualist metaphysics" is the notion of presence. I said earlier that for Gabriel Marcel, existence is the presence of the world and of things to me, which my body reaches via feeling. but, in his rigorous "Existence and Objectivity", he writes that even to say this,, already reintroduces a duality, a distinction between subject and object, where in reality, there exists none. He suggests that, rather than speaking of the presence of something to someone, we must speak of "an absolute presence". And, he once more points out that this presence is intimately related to feeling: "It is doubtless by evocation of the pure act of feeling, understood as interior resonance" that we can best understand "the presence which subtends the integrality of our experience and of any experience whatever" (MJ 331).

It is presence which enables us to make a transition from existence to value as well as to transcendence. "That which has value increases in us the feeling of presence whether it be ours or that of the universe," Marcel writes. Likewise according to him, the more pale, restrained, hesitant our affirmation of existence is, the less value we have (MJ 317). This surprising but powerful statement indicates the very important role which Marcel assigns to strong emotions in his metaphysics and in his ethics.

I will now turn to his treatment of emotions in our "affirmation of existence", especially in regard to our relations with other persons. We find a great many passages dealing with the role of emotions in our lives in the *Metaphysical Journal* and even more in Marcel's later works such as *Creative Fidelity*, *The Mystery of Being* and *The Existential Background of Human Dignity*. They are almost always accompanied by dramatizations, that is by references to imagined concrete situations which help us explore with Marcel the meaning of

the emotional feeling in question.<sup>13</sup>And of course the whole of Marcel's theater is also an exploration of human emotions as they express our relationships, or most often our failed relationships to others, and thus our reaching or not of community and the transcendent. Since it deals concretely with the immediate, such as our emotions, which philosophical reflection necessarily conceptualizes or "mediatizes", Marcel's theater plays a most important role for him, and is very much part of the double coding which makes him a postmodernist.

I want to mention in passing that Marcel's emphasis on the value of emotions places him, on this particular topic, in direct opposition to Immanuel Kant according to whom emotions and feelings must never play a role in the making of moral decisions. For Kant, it is the rational alone which must guide us in the doing of our duty, our following of the categorical imperative<sup>14</sup>

According to Gabriel Marcel, as we live out our relations to others, we create "adaptational bonds" which make us lose our original self-presence so that we become strangers to ourselves, and others in our lives do also. This is an "objectification" which corresponds, on the level of human relations, to objectivity in the natural world, that is to losing track of existence itself. In order to explore the occurrence of adaptational bonds, Gabriel Marcel dramatizes it by referring to two quite different possible situations. First, he takes the case of a man who receives a letter from a friend telling him that he has been ill, but has now recovered and gone on a trip. The man is not at all moved by the letter, which he takes as a point of information, not very different from news he might have heard

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<sup>13</sup>Marcel writes that he once suggested to his students that the only way to deal with a concrete situation, such as our encounter with evil is by "dramatization", that is by imagining the concrete situation of a human being encountering evil." [Gabriel Marcel, *Pour une Sagesse Tragique et son Au delà*, (Paris: Plon, 1968) p. 196.] In her paper called "Death and the Tragic in Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy" presented at the March 1992 meeting of the Association Présence de Gabriel Marcel in Paris, Geneviève Duso made an incisive analysis of Marcel's method of dramatization.

<sup>14</sup>Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Co., 1959).



on the radio. The friend is definitely, for the time being, a "him" for the man, and conversely "by that very fact" the man is also a "him" to himself (MJ 172). Secondly, Marcel asks us to imagine the situation of a man who has a stable sentiment for his wife, but he comments that between the man and his wife "no living attachment is established". Rather "the attachment tends to be converted into something inert and inanimate" (MJ 174). The man's wife is therefore a "her" for him and he is a "him" for himself.

Emotion occurs when the adaptational bonds which have been created between two persons are broken, in one way or another. In the case of the man who receives the letter from his friend, Gabriel Marcel tells us to now imagine that the letter had "an immediate emotive value, such as "I'm done for..." (MJ 172). Immediately, the man's attitude is changed. He is very moved and feels compassion for his friend. There has been a transition to a "we", to the "experience of community". And the man has been "revealed to himself". For emotions, which take us by surprise more than anything else, because they are not rationally conscious, "force the hidden me to emerge" (MJ 173).

In the case of the man with a stable sentiment for his wife, the adaptational bond is broken and an emotion arises when he discovers that she has been unfaithful. "Here emotion functions as a recall," writes Marcel. "The question concerns me, and I didn't realize it'. The 'Oh but', which is at the root of the emotion, sheds retrospective clarity on what interrupts or transforms" (MJ 174).

What is most interesting about the double dramatization just discussed is that, whereas the first emotion which breaks an adaptational bond, that of the man with the ill friend, is definitely a positive compassion for the friend, the second emotion which breaks the adaptational bond between the man and his wife, is probably a negative emotion, either anger or jealousy<sup>15</sup>. Yet in both cases Marcel sees the emotion, and especially the man's awareness of his emotion,

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<sup>15</sup>Although it could possibly also be a positive emotion, such as forgiveness, as in the case of Claude and Edmée in *A Man of God*. Cf. Gabriel Marcel "Un Homme de Dieu" in *Cliq Pièces Majeures* (Paris: Plon, 1973).

as forcing "the hidden I to emerge, and thus as having a positive role.

What Marcel shows in these dramatizations is that emotions have an ontological basis, that is, they affect my being, they create the person that I am or can become. It is the mysterious element in me which is revealed through emotions and which gives me value. It is also this element which, Marcel says, is "accessible to invocation" (MJ 173) which I shall now discuss.

When I first read Gabriel Marcel, I was surprised by the fact that a philosopher used the term "invocation", for I associated it with the litany of Holy Saturday during which the faithful invoked each of the saints one by one and asked them to intercede and pray for them. When I checked the definition, not too long ago, I discovered that while its first meaning is indeed "a solemn entreaty for blessing or intercession", its second meaning is "a formula for conjuring spirits". It was then and only then that I remembered that a great number of passages in the *Metaphysical Journal* deal with clairvoyance, telepathy, magic, prophecy and so on. Until that moment, I had the orthodox attitude ingrained in me by Catholicism and by philosophy. I ignored any allusions to the "conjuring of spirits".

But it is very interesting that, indeed, most of the passages in the *Journal* which deal with "invocation" have to do with communication with persons beyond time or beyond space, that is with extrasensory perception of one kind or another. The one which I find the most interesting and instructive concerns telepathic hallucinations or the representation of a scene outside time and space.

Before discussing a concrete "scene" as such, Marcel prepares the ground by distinguishing between the material phenomenon (from which we necessarily abstract), and the concrete scene itself from which we cannot abstract without destroying it. Taking the case of a shipwreck, he explains that the material phenomenon itself is subject to time and space. It is "a non-unifiable totality of shocks" whose characteristics are "inhuman and non-physical" (MJ 169). Although a spectator could take a snapshot view and transmit it, it takes place whether or not there is a spectator to see it. On the other hand, the concrete scene itself has a real unity, real persons take part

in it, and because of this "it transcends the contingent conditions of its appearance in time and space" (MJ 169).

With this distinction in mind, Gabriel Marcel asks us to imagine a man who, although he was not present at the death of his friend, subsequently recalls the scene. Many people would object that since he was not present at the scene, he cannot possibly recall it. But, according to Marcel, the only question which should be asked is whether there was a unity between the two friends, whether "we were one" at the time the scene took place, my friend and I, or became one subsequently. "For this unity to occur, it seems there must first of all be an appeal, an invocation, an 'abide with me', that is more or less clearly enunciated. Secondly, this appeal must be heard, though the subject does not necessarily know that he hears it. It is on the basis of this mysterious *co-esse* that the vision is built up" (MJ 170).

Marcel emphasizes that "invoking a being is different from and more than thinking of him (her)" (MJ 171). It must be based on a reality, have a metaphysical foundation. The "abide with me" must be able to be converted into "I will appear to you". I can only invoke someone with whom I have, or might have, a certain degree of intimacy. The word "with", which connotes a psychological unity or felt community, is very important here. An invocation cannot be efficacious without it.

It was not until 1947 that Marcel would point out to those of us who had not noticed it (the great majority of us, I am afraid, and I among them) the tremendous influence of metapsychism (or other kinds of extrasensory perception) on his thought. "To listen to the most intimate and pregnant aspect of our experience enables us to take off, like an airplane, and look at reality with new eyes," he wrote<sup>16</sup>.

This is exactly what took place in the case of invocation. Marcel's "listening" made him realize the importance of the psychological unity, of the felt community, in the invocation essential to telepathic hallucination. It made him look at love, at my relationship to a thou,

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<sup>16</sup>Gabriel Marcel "De l'Audace en Métaphysique". *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1947. Reprinted at the end of *Percées vers un Ailleurs*. (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1973), p. 418.

with new eyes. He could now say most forcefully that: "Love rises like an invocation, like an appeal of the I to the I" (MJ 221, 222); and that the opposition he had suggested earlier between invocation and indication, also applies to love. For the lover invokes the ego of the *thou*, not the ego source of information (MJ 222).

But Marcel's listening proved even more successful in the case of my relationship to God. For here, invocation takes on an even greater importance since it is my most frequent means of relating to "the Absolute Thou". Gabriel Marcel here finds himself more than ever on the dividing line between existence and objectivity. Might not the fact that I relate to the Thou via invocation make God's existence depend on my relation to him? If however, I say that God's existence is an objective fact which does not depend in any way on my relationship to him, am I not on the other hand making God's existence fall into pure objectivity, that is into an abstraction?

In order to elucidate the question, Marcel returns to his distinction between objectivity and existence, but by bringing in the question of invocation in its relation to existence he deepens the whole investigation. One of the ways to define objectivity is to say that it is "the universality of certain characteristics which can be recognized by any mind in good faith" (MJ 281). This necessarily eliminates anything which comes from me and leads to a network of abstractions and to a minimization of existence. For, as we saw earlier, existence is only in relation to me, to my body as a subject.

It is here that the role of invocation and its relation to the existence of God enters the picture. Invocation is experiential. Objectivity plays no role whatever in it. to invoke is the opposite of "to think of". For invocation to take place, there must be a *co-esse*, a community. But, someone may ask, how can I be sure that a community exists? Can I not be mistaken by the degree of intimacy I have with another being? (MJ 283). Marcel's answer is that verification is necessary as long as the thou, for whatever reason, remains a him "about whom I reserve for myself the possibility of saying 'wretched fellow, he deceived me, 'he abused my confidence'", that is, as long as we are in the realm of objectivity. But when the thou is only a thou "credit is no longer accorded with reservations about verification, it is

open and unconditional" (MJ 287)<sup>17</sup>. Marcel concludes that "the thou is to invocation what the object is to judgment" (MJ 286).

Marcel's listening has propelled him by a kind of extrapolation from the presence of the existing world in time and space to the invocation of God out of time and space, both reached via my body-as-a-subject. The occurrence of intermediary levels of existence (bodies existing beyond our time whether in the past or in the future, or beyond our physical space, as well as of spirits who were once bodies), and of intermediary levels of relationships (clairvoyance, telepathic hallucination, metapsychism, etc.) has certainly fueled the propulsion and the extrapolation. But, the most interesting point, which Marcel stresses continuously is that our way of reaching each of these types of existence, is always similar: presence, communion, invocation. The essential element is always the *co-esse*, the psychical unity, the felt community.

But what is listening - if not recollection or second reflection - each of them the fairy's wand which transforms objectivity to existence? For, through listening/second reflection I can recuperate the existence lost by the objectification of a first reflection, I can reestablish "in all its continuity that living tissue which imprudent analysis tore asunder" (MJ 334). Or "I can knowingly reestablish the state of nondivision that had been broken by rudimentary reflection" (MJ 336), thus returning to unity and community.

But, essential to the re-creation of the lost unity is my re-identification with my body, or my re-integration with my body (MJ 336). Whereas in the abstraction of objectification, I left behind life, the concrete and my body, as I recollect through second reflection, I turn again towards the body-as-a-subject that I am without abandoning anything. On the contrary, I find a more complete and concrete life.

I have suggested in this paper that Gabriel Marcel is a postmodernist in a number of ways. There is his insistence on the impossibility of thinking existence - insistence which is the fruit of his strong reaction against rationalism's and idealism's tendencies to

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<sup>17</sup>And Marcel adds "At this point, we can see the indissoluble connection between faith and charity" (MJ 283).

distort it or reduce it. There is his emphasis on "integral human experience" - emphasis which is the result of his choice to choose existence rather than to negate it (MJ 322). There is his decision, very early on in his philosophical career, to avoid the systematic exposition of his thought - whose systematization would have nullified his concrete approach to existence (MJ VII). As in the case of later postmodernists, this decision led Marcel to a truly liberating and empowering openness, as we saw for example in the case of his listening to the lessons of telepathic hallucination. There is also his double coding - such as his use of dramatization, together with philosophical reflection - whose fruitfulness we saw in a number of instances.

I have also suggested that Gabriel Marcel's notion of body-as-a-subject incorporates the four above ways in which he is a postmodernist. For, it is because I am one with my body that rationalism or idealism cannot abstract from it without tearing apart the living tissue of existence. And it is only when my body is a subject that the world exists for me; and, when I have lost that existence through objectification, it is only through reintegration with my body that I can recuperate it. It is because I am a body-as-a-subject who experiences his or her own individual life, that existence cannot be thought or systematized. And it is because he wanted to express and explore the presence, the emotions and the invocation possible for the body-as-a-subject that Gabriel Marcel had recourse to dramatizations and to drama, as well as to philosophical reflection.

But, over and above all this, we find the postmodern themes of sensualism and alterity inherent in the notion of the body-as-a-subject. Marcel called his metaphysics "sensualistic", because for him, sensation (the presence of my body, of the world and of others), and feelings are all intricately linked to my body-as-a-subject. Simultaneously, alterity is the quintessence of the body-as-a-subject, which is one with itself only when it is in communion with the world, with others, and with God. It is, then, all these aspects of the body-as-a-subject which make it a preeminently postmodernist notion.

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