

if feminism must attend to the psychoanalytic frame;
if the psychoanalytic frame puts the idea of autonomy in question;
if the idea of autonomy has been the ideal of feminist aspirations;
then
what are the social and political implications of a feminism which, under
the guidance of Lacanian psychoanalysis, attributes visions of autonomy
to the seductions of the imaginary?

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PECCORINI, FRANCISCO L. *Selfhood as Thinking Thought in the Work of Gabriel Marcel: A New Interpretation.* Lewiston, New York, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1987. 190 pages, including Select Bibliography and Name Index. ISBN 0-88946-329-8.

Appropriately, the author begins his "new interpretation" of Marcel's thought with a warning to the reader not to expect a general study of the important themes of Marcel's philosophy. This book is a specialized study. It grew out of the second biennial meeting of the Institute for the Encyclopaedia of Ultimate Reality and Meaning, and seeks to answer one question only, namely, what is ultimate reality and meaning as revealed in Marcel's philosophical reflections. The claim to giving a new interpretation of Marcel rests upon the author's focussing his attention on Marcel's notion of the "thinking thought" (*pensée pensante*) as the locus, and, indeed, in the last analysis and in a participatory form, the very identity of ultimate reality and meaning.

The book proceeds in six chapters whose close connection becomes evident only in the thoughtful reading of the text. Chapter One may appear at first to be merely an intellectual biography of Marcel, but its intent is to establish early on, the close connection between philosophical thinking and lived experience, a connection which is then relied upon and made central to the whole work.

Chapter Two, entitled "Being as the Pure Subject: The Root of Existence," undertakes the difficult task of showing how the

"pensée pensante" is at once both the deepest meaning of self and the presence of ultimate reality. The interpretation begins with the distinction between thought as content grasped by the mind and thought as the spiritual act wherein any content is grasped or known. This latter, dynamic act of becoming, which remains always beyond the grasp of the conceptualizing thought, is seen as constituting the selfhood of the human person in its lived and unverifiable, and always incomplete, coming to be.

The passage to the question of ultimate reality and meaning is achieved in the understanding that this thinking thought is nothing other than the finite mind's participation in Being. Understood fully and concretely, from the other side as it were, this participation of the human self in Being is, in fact, "nothing but Being asserting its presence in me" (p. 25). Like the passive intellect (the "blank slate") of Aristotle's *De Anima* the "pensée pensante" is potentially all things while it is actually none of them.

As a study of Marcel, the form of the author's argument properly relies upon both early and late texts of Marcel, especially upon texts discussing the "blind intuition" of Being understood as "an assurance which underlies the entire development of thought, even of discursive thought." The value of the argument depends to a great degree, it appears, on the reader's ability and willingness to enter into a reflection on self which goes beyond the positivist experience of the "I" as content.

Sensitive to the fact that neither logic nor everyday experience require a person to go beyond the cogito, Peccorini devotes chapter three to a discussion of faith and freedom as the foundation of that knowledge which goes beyond immediate feeling. Only in a free act of faith can one transcend the self as content and gain a perception of the pure subject. This freedom, however, is not arbitrariness. It must be understood rather as fidelity to the mind's nuptial bond with Being. In such an understanding the skeptical doubt about the actual existence of the external world, which has troubled so much of modern western philosophy, is revealed as the pseudo problem that it is. More important for Peccorini's purposes is that the uncovering of the "pensée pensante," which is inseparable from the mind's faithful commitment to Being, can be seen as the universal condition for the possibility of authentic human life.

The first thing that strikes us is that the conditions of possibility of so many and so important features of human existence--logic, perception, faith, the metaphysical value of the ontological appetite and of the moral law, as well as love, hope, and absolute fidelity--do in fact reduce to one, namely, the makeup of the human subject as pure thought and its direct participation in Being. (p. 73)

The fruitful realization of the promise contained in this condition of possibility depends upon the adoption of a disposition of "recollection." That the present age is prepared to adopt this disposition is far from clear, and Peccorini rightly ties the idea of recollection to the difficult notion of the blinded intuition of Being which grants not comprehension but assurance that Being is on my side. In this connection he quotes Marcel as the latter expresses his fundamental agreement with Heidegger's equally difficult idea of the forgetfulness of Being: "Upon reflection it is there that my essential agreement with Heidegger on what he has called the oblivion of Being seems to become more apparent to me" (p. 75. see *En chemin vers quel eveil?*, 1971, 9.202).

The remaining three chapters of the book seek to elaborate the meaning of this direct participation in Being, "that constitutes my own interiority" (p. 67), in the areas of human community, immortality and ethics.

Since that direct participation in Being which constitutes the self as thinking thought is a participation in light, the participation in Being is at the same time a bonding with all that participates in this light. Peccorini sees in this teaching a profound agreement with Aristotle's teaching concerning the agent intellect which enlightens the passive intellect and eventually the senses as well. The chapter ends with a discussion of "The Christ as the Foundation of The Community" which presents Marcel's acknowledged affinity to the Johannine teaching on Christ as the Light that enlightens everyone who comes into the world.

This participation in the light, especially in its Christian exemplification, cannot be separated from love. It is a participation in the light which is joy to be light. This understanding is the ground for the faith in immortality, that is, the refusal to despair over the death of the beloved. Although Marcel is one with

Heidegger in seeing death as other than a biological event, he distances himself from Heidegger's understanding of "being-unto-death" as a structure of human existence on the grounds that Heidegger's analysis neglects the central importance of love in the constitution of personhood. One might wonder with Ricoeur, however, whether Marcel (and Peccorini) fail to do justice to the Heideggerian notion of "care."

The culmination, and not just the end, of the study is the final chapter called "The Nuptial Bond of Life as an Ethical Arrow for a Lay World." Here the author successfully, if not always clearly, brings the central features of the "pensee pensante" discussed earlier into an intelligible and working harmony. As a participation in light, and not itself the light, the free self is in its freedom is essentially an ethical self, bound by the necessity of love toward all who participate in the light. The ethics following from this understanding is an ethics which demands a creaturely humility on the part of the individual person. It also provides, contrary to the view of Sartre against whom Marcel struggled, a way of understanding human nature as essentially an openness to life rather than a "pour-soi," and thus suitable to serve as a criterion for morals "for all seasons." As a free participation in the light which is the absolute recourse, the self as thinking thought is itself the manifestation of, and the pointer to the divine perfection.

A certain lack of ease might well accompany the reader of *Selfhood as Thinking Thought in the Work of Marcel*. If so, this will surely be due in part to the subject matter itself, whose exposition must be done chiefly not by logical argument but by inviting the reader to partake in a search for insight and understanding. Furthermore, the search itself can be entered only by those willing to make a prior commitment.

The lack of ease is due also in part, however, to an unnecessary lack of clarity, arising perhaps from a placing of the text in the hands of the printers before it was fully ready. I repeatedly found myself wishing the matter had been thought through more clearly rather than hinted at and left to the reader's own efforts, that the transitions had been made more evident, that the use of the work of other philosophers, sometimes quoted, had been more fully integrated into the study of Marcel's work. The

author tells us on page 148 that "The lack of time forces us to leave that task [of showing how Sartre's misgivings about the non-human character of Being are on rather weak grounds] to the reader." This reader, at least, felt that in other places also, too much was left to the effort of the reader. Any reader's patience will surely be tried by the lack of accuracy of the printed text. Typographical errors are numerous, so numerous as to be distracting, and occasionally, when several words are run together, to be at first unintelligible. Irritating also is the lack of factual accuracy with which the author reports Marcel speaking to Pierre Boutang in 1977 (p. 92), to Rene Poirier in 1976 (p. 94) and writing his testament in 1976 (p. 97). Even if one agrees that Marcel continues to be active after his death, these particular activities presumably took place before his death.

Having voiced these criticisms, I wish to end this review by acknowledging that Peccorini's study has brought me a fuller understanding of Marcel, and has provoked me to search out Nishitani and other thinkers whom he brings into proximity with Marcel. Reading his text has also caused me to think further on the issues of personal interiority, immortality, and natural religion.

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LA PENSEE ABSURDE PEUT-ELLE ETRE CONVERTIE EN DISCOURS POSITIF?

GARDIES, JEAN-LOUIS. *Le raisonnement par l'absurde*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991; 206 pp. ISBN 2-13-043829-6.

Pour les logiciens et les épistémologistes le raisonnement par l'absurde a été et reste une énigme. On aimerait l'éviter, mais on ne peut s'en passer. Depuis Aristote on reconnaît, de façon explicite ou implicite, qu'il n'appartient pas à la voie royale de la