

This is partly due to canon law drawn up by clerics who both idealize us and distrust us and would chain us to the top of a pedestal, though also due to our own deep desire to concentrate our devotion. But it has the danger of narrowing our vision and in these days of *aggiornamento* it has this particular danger that we come to love our houses with a fierce feminine possessiveness, even the dangerous flight of steps and the sometimes hideous interior décor. It is a nerve-racking business

for the housebound to repair the house while they are living in it. So we paper over the cracks and re-arrange the furniture. But this cannot go on for ever. We will never find the vital answers until we have the courage to ask ourselves the probing questions, the serenity to hold on during the inevitable gap between question and even the most tentative answer and the tenacity to face further questions that will surely arise in the process.

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PROBLEMATIC MAN, by Gabriel Marcel. *Burns and Oates, New York, London, 1967.* 144 pp. 32s.

THE WORLD OF PERSONS, by Charles Winckelmans de Cléty. *Burns and Oates, London, 1967.* 444 pp. 63s.

As a description of his philosophy, Marcel prefers the term Christian Socratism to Christian Existentialism: the strongly platonist orientation of his later thought makes this preference understandable. Nevertheless, the origin of Marcel's whole philosophy is that self-questioning of man which finds its answer in a self-creation within a communion of persons, and he is more accurately seen as working out a Christian personalism. *Problematic Man* (ET of *L'Homme Problématique*, 1955) can be seen as a commentary on his achievement.

Marcel's introductory essay on the concept of Uneasiness, followed by his analyses of this problem in other thinkers, reveals how this question of the person has determined his entire philosophical attitude. This question forced him out of an idealism which suppressed man's historicity. It determines his rejection of the Aristotelian-Thomist account of the relationship between God and Man, which he sees (p. 54) as a mechanistic debasement of both. It brings him to the valid insight (p. 143) that the philosophies of existence founded on anguish lead to a dead end, when they ignore the possibility and fact of hope. It brings his philosophical journey into remarkable proximity with that of Heidegger, not only in their original overcoming of a subject-object dualism by showing that man's being-in-the-world precedes and grounds all objectification, but also in their later reflexions on Being and the Holy and on language as a disclosure of world (cf. pp. 44f.). Finally it is Marcel's Christian personalism which relates him to a succession of thinkers from Augustine onwards whose reflexion on uneasiness and the intersubjectivity of spiritual destinies has articulated itself in a Christian Platonism—a metaphysic of light, of truth as presence, of essence and participation.

One has to ask, then: why has Marcel's philosophy not been more decisive? Why, for example, were his fundamental insights into human existence—the dualism between Being and Having, Mystery and Problem, Incarnation and Reification—ignored by investigators into psychological alienation, Laing for instance, for whom Sartre's concept of bad faith or Heidegger's being-in-the-world were so important? Was it that disintegration attracts more than integration? Was it the too overtly Christian language, the lack of an orthodox atheistic rubric? Or was it not something in the philosophical manner that privatized his insights, an orientation towards inwardness, face-to-face encounters and a cosmic piety which could be felt as a dualistic evasion of the technology, abstract thought and secularization characterizing life today? Marcel's thought suggests a soul in exile, divided from itself and its spiritual fatherland. His work, in its greatness and limitations, expresses the problem that no personalist philosophy hitherto has resolved—that of integrating within its perspective various impersonal levels of reality and modes of awareness, especially rational abstraction and scientific analysis. What Christian personalism needed was less, perhaps, a Platonist than an Aristotelian development.

Fr Charles Winckelmans de Cléty has made here a decisive contribution. *The World of Persons* also operates between two poles, problematical man and intersubjective man. But the connexion is made, not via Platonism, but by a re-formulation of the Aristotelian question: not however by *reconstructing* unity from multiplicity, but by showing phenomenologically the personal unity that precedes and grounds multiplicity. The book unfolds a single intuition, that the universe is a system formed by a plurality of interpenetrating, mutually

dependent personal acts-worlds. The fundamental questions of personalist philosophy scattered throughout Marcel's opus now receive detailed analysis. Such questions as incarnation, the 'pre-predicative', personal act, life-project, the personalist analysis of cognition, personal space and time, the human community, evolution, the God-question—in all these what Marcel illuminated and yet partly privatized, Fr Winckelmans develops on several interacting levels. For Marcel's philosophy arises from recollection, elucidating via privileged experiences a spiritual situation of estrangement and conversion. Fr Winckelmans' analysis, by contrast, arises from observation, communicating the personalist implications of an integral human experience. Marcel selects in the history of philosophy only those concepts which he sees as illuminating his spiritual journey. Fr Winckelmans can reformulate a philosophical concept (e.g. Aristotle's form-in-the-matter: cf. pp. 13-15) within a personalist perspective. Thus he has understood Thomism as first of all a philosophy of existence and so central to the question of the person. The concept of a personalistic universe is therefore no longer a private insight, but the means for philosophy, anthropological sciences and theology to enter into discussion.

In fact both books point towards theology. Dewart's enthusiastic introduction to *Problematic Man* sees it as a guide through the desert

of a 'God is dead' theology. Students of the theology influenced by Marcel—that of Troisfontaines, Mouroux and of Dewart himself—may be more sceptical. *The World of Persons* is expressly intended as a philosophical basis for a presentation of the whole Christian message (pp. 439f.). It seems in fact to hold out immense possibilities for theology. The concept of interpersonal space and time would provide a new basis for questions in Eucharistic theology (Mystery Presence, Transfinalization) never yet adequately formulated. The philosophy of personal community has never yet been adequate in the theology of the Last Things. Finally, anyone puzzled as to how to approach today the question of angels—their nature, psychology, relation to the world—should read the fascinating section on the Cosmic Persons (pp. 355f.).

If both books express the same basic idea, that authentic existence is interpersonal existence, they do so in very different directions. The heavy language, neologisms and linelong hyphenated expressions in *The World of Persons* bear no aesthetic comparison with Marcel's elegant style and subtlety of judgement. And yet the second book is the more important for Christian personalism. The first book is a commentary on the past, the second an opening to the future.

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FIRST THE POLITICAL KINGDOM, by Brian Wicker. *Sheed and Ward, London, 1967.* 143 pp. 12s. 6d.

This is a readable and lucid account of the nature and development of the Catholic Left in this country, and its relation to the New Left in general. As Mr Wicker rightly says, what these movements need is an adequate philosophical basis, and particularly a doctrine of man. In my opinion, what is required at this point is an account which mediates between the verifiable but impersonal theories of the behaviourist psychologists on the one hand, and on the other the brilliantly suggestive but scientifically questionable, and unfortunately mutually contradictory, schemes of the existentialists and those more or less in the intellectual tradition of Freud. Mr Wicker helps one to see the problem, though to my mind he is not looking for a solution to it in quite the right direction.

The theological question to be put to the Catholic Left is: is the ideal socialist society *an aspect of the Kingdom of God*, or is it *identical* with it? Now as far as one can see from the Bible and the Christian tradition, the Kingdom of God will consist of a renovation of the individual, the community, and the material world. Certainly it is arguable, and in my opinion it is true and important, that the social aspect of the Kingdom of God will be far more similar to the ideals of the New Left than to those of the Old Right; and hence that work for socialism is work for the Kingdom of God. But the fact remains that to imply that the Kingdom of God is *nothing but* the socialist state, however broadly the latter is conceived, is a gross limitation of it.

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