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Gabriel Marcel

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Marcel, Gabriel (1889–1973), existential philosopher, playwright, composer, literary critic, book editor; friend of Bergson*, Maritain*, and Ricoeur* and a critic of Jean-Paul Sartre's atheistic existentialism*. A convert to Roman Catholicism (1929), he criticized the modern obsession with technology* that ignored the God-given dignity of each person*, the value of intimate interpersonal relations, and the deep human need for being (God). Using phenomenological* analysis of lived experience, he was among the first to explain the distinction between I–thou* and I–him/her relations, between being and having: the phenomenon of lived body; the situated dependent character of the self; the characteristics of fidelity, hope*, love*, and humility*; and the experiences involving obscure participation in an Absolute Thou, ensuring eternal* fulfillment.

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