

NEWS AND VIEWS



Gabriel Marcel Institute of Philosophy Sydney Report on the 3rd Annual Conference “The Unconscious Civilization”

It is my great pleasure to report on the 3rd annual conference of the *Gabriel Marcel Institute of Philosophy Sydney* on the theme of *The Unconscious Civilization*, held on Saturday, October 25th, 2025 at our premises. Over the past two years we have focused our conference on key Christian representatives (T. S. Eliot in 2023 and Thomas Merton in 2024) emphasizing the importance of the inner life. This year we decided to build on the importance of the inner life by focusing on a key theme—a theme of global significance—that considers the inner life with respect to larger societal issues; to bring forth ideas that will help foster the conditions for the better world to which we aspire. The theme of the unconscious civilization, also the title of John Ralston Saul’s bestselling book from 1995, refers to that which is repressed and unacknowledged by social institutions, but that influences social behaviour in ways that undermine the common good, even if unintentionally.

We began with a keynote address by Lacanian scholar and psychoanalyst Dr Russell Grigg, followed by a further five presentations from scholars and academics (Carlos Perona Calvete, Tom Willett, Dr Edgar Rivera Colon, Dr Jurgen Lawrenz, Matilde Ghelardini) covering themes related to culture, politics and technology. The presentations, while not necessarily focused on Marcel himself, nonetheless spoke to the complexity of a philosophy such as Marcel’s as they covered vast terrain across the humanistic disciplines, doing justice to Marcel’s call for the need to *reflect with a sense of vigour*.

Dr Grigg discussed the relationship between the good-life (i.e., the ethical life) and false idols (a perennial issue for philosophy since the time of Plato). The relationship can be confused

in very acute ways in the life of the modern person, and this confusion can be disclosed quite successfully via the discipline of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis, it is believed, can have an interesting modern take on the relationship. It can reveal some interesting connections in the life of persons as they navigate a postmodern world.



Building upon the keynote address, throughout the day certain key themes emerged that proved foundational to the overall aim of the conference theme: political imagination is vital to interrupt perpetual political crises that subjugate classes of people and pit them against each other as an effect of industrial greed (greed being a false idol); the power of modern technology should be harnessed, as opposed to rejected, in creative ways via a spiritual humanistic framework; ideological contradictions play a role in the diminution of authentic discourse, which plays a key role in the decline of a society; and reflection of what is irreducible and indefinable is key to the overall health of human persons as they face the dangers associated with technology and globalization.

The presentations were followed by an informal panel discussion and Q&A. Discussion revolved around the clarification of the notion of the unconscious civilization. By the end, it was made clear that the notion itself is about civilization and its discontents, and that the matter can only be approached from within concrete human experience: that is to say, from the various disciplines that humanity engages in. These include the natural sciences, religious discourse, colloquial dialogue, music and differing literary genres (the novel, poetry). Within any of these disciplines, it was noted, we can aim for some revelation that will help advance a sea change in culture.

The conference proceedings will be published in the upcoming edition of our journal, *The Marcellian*, in early 2026. On behalf of the Gabriel Marcel Institute, I wish to thank all friends of Marcel for your support, and a special word to the Gabriel Marcel Society in Kansas City, USA, for its continued promotion of Marcel's legacy across the USA and further abroad. Our intention down the road is to establish a more formal Marcel network in Australia—next year's conference

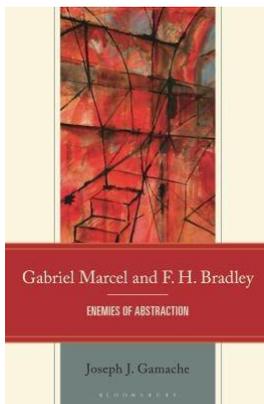
will revolve directly around Marcel himself within the context of his dialogue with Sartre and Wahl (an essential aspect to the trajectory of his thought during his lifetime).

Nathan Tartak
 Director
ntartak.marcelinstitute@outlook.com

* * * * *

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP, and notices

1. JOSEPH GAMACHE: *Gabriel Marcel and F. H. Bradley: Enemies of Abstraction* (Bloomsbury, 2025)



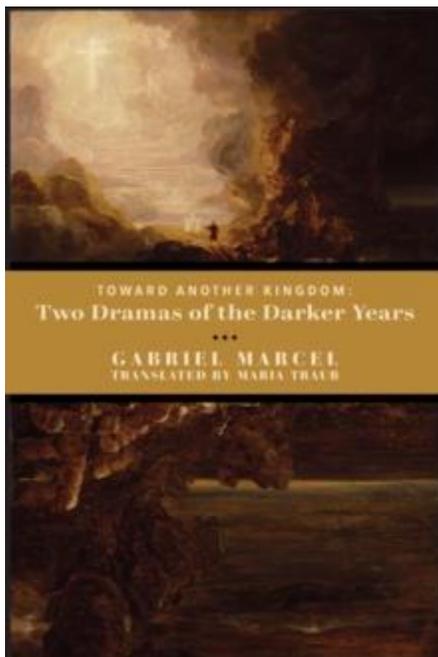
The first sustained scholarly treatment of the influence of F. H. Bradley on the work of Gabriel Marcel, this book argues that studying the philosophical work of Marcel

together with that of F. H. Bradley is mutually illuminating for our understanding of each philosopher. Marcel's more dramatic, existential, and phenomenological work illustrates the significance and relevance of what seems, at first glance, to be the dry metaphysics of Bradley. Bradley's philosophy helps explain the metaphysical relevance of Marcel's thought, as well as supplying the needed theoretical elaboration of key concepts that Marcel left underdeveloped. The author takes the reader through a series of fundamental metaphysical issues, including truth, the nature of immediate experience, abstraction, identity, personhood, and God. The book concludes by suggesting that a synthesis of the insights of Marcel and Bradley yields a novel version of philosophical personalism—the view that humans are the most metaphysically fundamental and morally valuable beings that exist.

“Joseph Gamache's *Gabriel Marcel and F. H. Bradley: Enemies of Abstraction* is a joy to read. He brings to light a dialogue that has been undeservedly neglected and in so doing produces genuinely new scholarship. The fruits of the dialogue between the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel and the British philosopher F.H. Bradley are made possible by Gamache's exquisite ability to make complex thought accessible. Few writers compare in bringing metaphysics to earth. In reference to Gamache's

interlocutors, Bradley provides metaphysical insight into Marcel's experiential philosophy, while Marcel illuminates the existential consequences of Bradley's metaphysics. The result is a personalism that avoids both individualism and idealism. While idealism includes the individual but at the cost of personal experience, individualism is inadequate to capture the self who is a participatory being. This dual rejection is explored via meditations on truth, feeling, abstraction, the nature of self-knowledge, identity, and the body, with a final reflection on the Absolute and love. The journey concludes with Bradley and Marcel drawn together in their shared rejection of abstraction and their willingness to make lived experience the focal point of philosophy.” —*Geoffrey Karabin, Professor of Philosophy, Neumann University.*

2. MARIA TRAUB, editor and translator, *Toward Another Kingdom: Two Dramas of the Darker Years: Gabriel Marcel* (St Augustine's Press, 2025, pp.183).



Professor Traub's latest translation of Gabriel Marcel's post-war plays is a window into the French philosopher's answer to his own signature questions regarding human

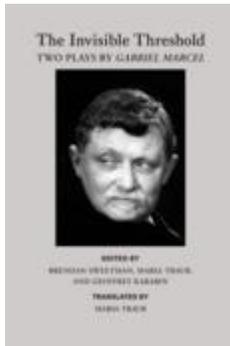
existence. And as in the earlier collection of plays, *The Invisible Threshold*, the realism, passion and sincerity that frame conscience and moral duty in Marcel are most profoundly visible in the day-to-day of family life. Ideas never before presented theatrically emerge in Marcel's characters who struggle to understand their times and how best to live in them. Post-war life was as much a spiritual reckoning as it was a new society, and Marcel's treatment of introspection is a valuable key to his own work.

Marcel's dramas require characters to respond authentically and from their true selves. He thereby offers the vision of how individual compromises may build up to break the world and condemn, or, conversely, contribute to the discovery and meaning of relation and redemption. Traub's new translation will interest the player as much as the scholar, and Marcel's aptitude for theatrical writing is proven once again. His intellectual sensitivity creates characters that beckon performance, which is an added dimension to the presentation of the human condition.

3. Reminder...of a recent publication from St Augustine's Press:

The Invisible Threshold: Two Plays by Gabriel Marcel

Edited by Brendan Sweetman, Maria Traub, and Geoffrey Karabin; Translated by Maria Traub, 275 pages.



French philosopher and dramatist, Gabriel Marcel (1888-1973), who belonged to the movement of French existentialism, is one of the most insightful thinkers of the twentieth century. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Marcel approaches human existence from a theistic perspective, and gives priority to the themes of hope, fidelity and faith in the human search for meaning in a challenging world. Written early in his career, the plays in this new volume were originally published in 1913 under the title *Le Seuil invisible (The Invisible Threshold)*.

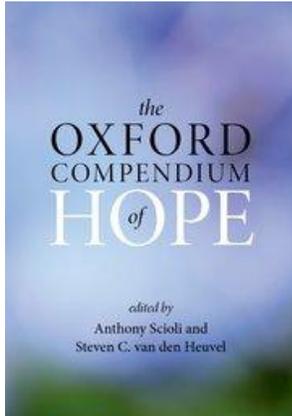
The first play, *Grace*, explores the theme of religious conversion. The drama depicts a crisis between characters of genuine depth and sincerity, who are struggling with different interpretations of shared experiences. After a serious illness, Gerard, one of the main protagonists, undergoes a religious conversion, an experience which allows of two different and irreconcilable interpretations. The play raises the question of grace in a profound dramatization of a personal religious

experience as it sustains in challenging life situations.

Similar themes are addressed but developed differently in *The Sandcastle*. This drama explores the confrontation between one's beliefs and their consequences when faced with challenging family and social circumstances, especially with regard to the tension between love and freedom that often arises between parents and children. Marcel raises issues of moral character, commitment and sincerity, and introduces the role doubt plays in the way we form and hold our convictions. The springboard for the unfolding of the drama is the contrast between accepting Christianity in an intellectual and cultural sense, and a Christianity that is lived. Both plays bring out one of Marcel's major themes: that life's most profound, fulfilling experiences are often compromised in what he describes as the modern, broken world (*le monde cassé*), a world unfortunately characterized by alienation, loss of meaning and feelings of despair.

These new plays of Marcel's, here translated into English for the first time, will appeal to all interested in the role of grace in everyday life, the relationship between faith and reason, the choice of faith in a secular world, and the struggle between inauthentic and authentic existence. Marcel raises weighty and challenging questions, but does not offer final answers. In his dramatic work, he leaves those to us.

4. **BRENDAN SWEETMAN**, “Hope and Existentialism,” in *The Oxford Compendium of Hope*, ed. by Anthony Scioli and Steven C. van den Heuvel (Oxford University Press, 2025), pp.171-184.



From the Editors: Hope emerges in the space between our most significant desires

and the vicissitudes that define the human condition. The challenges of a recent pandemic and renewal of ancient hostilities around the globe add to a growing list of concerns about the sustainability of life on this planet. The need for hope has never been more palpable. *The Oxford Compendium of Hope* is the most comprehensive collection of research and scholarship on this topic, with contributions from over 70 scholars across fourteen disciplines

Free Download: This book is available for free as an open access book from Oxford at:

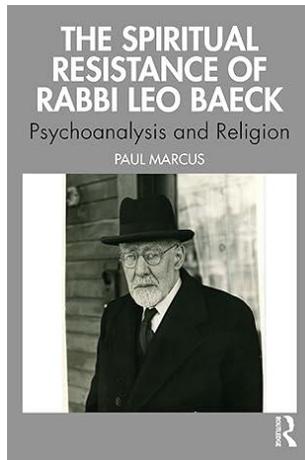
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-compendium-of-hope-9780197618240?cc=us&lang=en&#>

5. **BENJAMIN PARVIS**, “Gabriel Marcel and the Mysteries of Death and Despair,” *Church Life Journal*, May 8th 2025. (A Journal of the McGrath Institute for Church Life, University of Notre Dame)

Article here:

<https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/gabriel-marcel-and-the-mysteries-of-death-and-despair/>

6. PAUL MARCUS, *The Spiritual Resistance of Rabbi Leo Baeck: Psychoanalysis and Religion* (Routledge 2025)



The *Spiritual Resistance of Rabbi Leo Baeck* provides an overview of the life of Dr. Leo Baeck (1873–1956), a German-Jewish rabbi, theologian, historian and Holocaust survivor, from a psychoanalytic perspective.

Paul Marcus approaches Baeck’s life and intellectual/theological contribution as it interfaces with a broadly defined psychoanalysis. This book describes and explains how Baeck maintained the rudiments of his autonomy, integration and humanity while remaining in Nazi Germany and while in the ghetto Theresienstadt, displaying astonishing courage, character, and goodness—a triumph of a civilized person amidst Nazi brutality. Marcus also considers psychic resilience and moral psychology and assesses contemporary criticisms of Baeck.

The Spiritual Resistance of Rabbi Leo Baeck will be of interest to academics and scholars of psychoanalytic studies, spirituality, Jewish studies and resistance. It will also appeal to psychoanalysts in training and in practice.

(There is a sustained discussion of Marcel’s ideas throughout Dr Marcus’s book—*Ed.*)

“Paul Marcus has brought the perspectives of an eminent psychoanalyst to bear on the complex life and thought of Rabbi Dr. Leo Baeck. He illuminates the difficult experiences of Baeck under the Nazis and in Theresienstadt in a unique way, leading to a much greater understanding of Baeck’s navigation of his impossible circumstances. His conclusions highlighting lessons of Baeck’s life for psychoanalysis highlight the ongoing relevance of Baeck’s career and thought for today’s troubled world.” --*Lawrence H. Schiffman, Global Distinguished Professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies, New York University.*

7. RECENT MARCEL PUBLICATIONS REISSUED BY CLUNY MEDIA (Providence, Rhode Island):

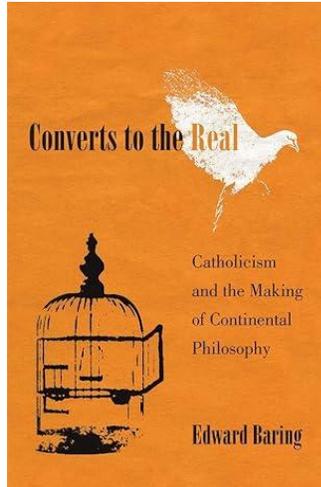
Gabriel Marcel, *The Philosophy of Existence* (first published in English in 1956)

Gabriel Marcel, *Problematic Man* (first published in English in 1967)

Gabriel Marcel, *Presence and Immortality* (first published in English in 1967)

Kenneth Gallagher, *The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel* (originally published 1962 by Fordham University Press)

8. EDWARD BARING: *Converts to the Real: Catholicism and the Making of Continental Philosophy* (Harvard, 2019) — includes many references to Marcel.



In the most wide-ranging history of phenomenology since Herbert Spiegelberg's *The Phenomenological Movement* over fifty years ago, Baring uncovers a new and unexpected force—Catholic intellectuals—behind the growth of phenomenology in the early twentieth century, and makes the case for the movement's catalytic intellectual and social impact.

Of all modern schools of thought, phenomenology has the strongest claim to the mantle of “continental” philosophy. In the first half of the twentieth century, phenomenology expanded from a few German towns into a movement spanning Europe. Edward Baring shows that credit for this prodigious growth goes to a surprising group of early enthusiasts: Catholic

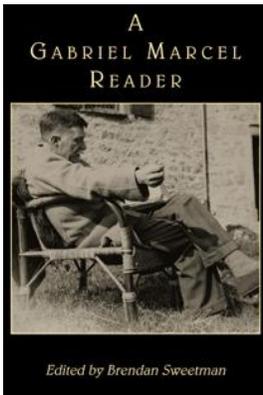
intellectuals. Placing phenomenology in historical context, Baring reveals the enduring influence of Catholicism in twentieth-century intellectual thought.

Converts to the Real argues that Catholic scholars allied with phenomenology because they thought it mapped a path out of modern idealism—which they associated with Protestantism and secularization—and back to Catholic metaphysics. Seeing in this unfulfilled promise a bridge to Europe's secular academy, Catholics set to work extending phenomenology's reach, writing many of the first phenomenological publications in languages other than German and organizing the first international conferences on phenomenology. The Church even helped rescue Edmund Husserl's papers from Nazi Germany in 1938. But phenomenology proved to be an unreliable ally, and in debates over its meaning and development, Catholic intellectuals contemplated the ways it might threaten the faith. As a result, Catholics showed that phenomenology could be useful for secular projects, and encouraged its adoption by the philosophical establishment in countries across Europe and beyond.

Baring traces the resonances of these Catholic debates in postwar Europe. From existentialism, through the phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to the speculative realism of the present, European thought bears the mark of Catholicism, the original continental philosophy.

9. INTERVIEWS: “Gabriel Marcel, Embodiment, and Being,” *a wide-ranging interview on Marcelian themes, with Professor Steven Knepper (Associate Professor English, Virginia Military Institute), on the Hermitix Podcast,*

YouTube, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qISDFtFfLc>

10. REMINDER:

BRENDAN SWEETMAN (EDITOR), *A Gabriel Marcel Reader* (St. Augustine's Press, 2011)—a selection of key readings from the full range of Marcel's works on such topics as: the human person; God and religion; reflections on drama and on art; critique of contemporary cultural trends; reflective concerns about technology; the nature of philosophy; questions of knowledge and being; among others.

* * * * *

WHAT MARCEL IS SAYING:

ON HOPE: "He who hopes says simply: "It will be found." In hoping, I do not create in the strict sense of the word, but I appeal to the existence of a certain creative power in the world, or rather to the actual resources at the disposal of this creative power. Where, on the other hand, my spirit has been as it were tarnished by catalogued experience, I refuse to appeal to this creative power, I deny its existence; all outside me, and perhaps within me also (if I am logical) appears to me as simple repetition...I should however add that here, as everywhere for that matter, a certain slipping or degradation inevitably tends to come about. "To hope in" becomes "to expect from" then "to have due to me," that is to say "to count on" and finally "to claim" or "to demand."

...."I hope in thee for us"; such is perhaps the most adequate and the most elaborate expression of the act which the verb "to hope" suggests in a way which is still confused and ambiguous. "In thee — for us": between this "thou" and this "us" which only the most persistent reflection can finally discover in the act of hope, what is the vital link? Must we not reply that "Thou" is in some way the guarantee of the union which holds us together, myself to myself, or the one to the other, or these beings to those other beings? More than a guarantee which secures or confirms from outside a union which already exists, it is the very cement which binds the whole into one. If this is the case, to despair of myself, or to despair of us, is essentially to despair of the Thou....I open my soul when I hope—a prophetic consciousness, as we have said, but vague and in danger of becoming obliterated to the extent that it seeks to pass itself off as second sight....The more we allow ourselves to be the servants of Having, the more we shall let ourselves fall a prey to the gnawing anxiety which Having involves, the more we shall tend to lose not only the aptitude for hope, but even I should say the very belief, indistinct as it may be, of its possible reality. In this sense it is no doubt true that, strictly speaking, only those beings who

are entirely free from the shackles of ownership in all its forms are able to know the divine light-heartedness of life in hope. But, as far as we can judge, this liberation, this exemption, must remain the privilege of a very small number of chosen souls. The vast majority of men are, as far as we can see, destined to remain entangled in the inextricable meshes of Having, and there are actually the gravest reasons for thinking that it is on this condition, burdensome as it may be, that humanity is able to discharge, well or badly as the case may be, the tasks, often so thankless and obscure, which have been assigned to it.”

“...it is both true and false to say that it depends on us whether we hope or not. At the root of hope there is something which is literally offered to us: but we can refuse hope just as we can refuse love. Moreover, we can no doubt deny hope, just as we can deny or degrade our love....We see from this why it is legitimate to consider hope as a virtue; the truth is that all virtue is the particularisation of a certain interior force, and that to live in hope is to obtain from oneself that one should remain faithful in the hour of darkness to that which in its origin was perhaps only an inspiration, an exaltation, a transport.”

[Selection reprinted from Gabriel Marcel, *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysics of Hope*, trans. by Emma Crauford (South Bend, IN.: St. Augustine’s Press, 2010), essay originally published 1945] © The Gabriel Marcel Estate and St. Augustine’s Press, 2010.]

* * * * *

Gabriel Marcel Society Annual Meeting Report, Oct 2025

The most recent Annual meeting of the Gabriel Marcel Society was held as part of the annual conference of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, at the University of Notre Dame, Oct 31st, 2025. The theme was: “Marcel, Technology, and Developments in Artificial Intelligence.”

The first paper was presented by **Timothy Jaeger**, a Ph.D. student at Stony Brook University, New York. Tim’s paper, titled, “Gabriel Marcel and Max Scheler's Critique of Modern Mass Society,” began by examining Marcel’s critique of modern mass society using his distinction between technology and *technics*, arguing that the latter functions not merely as a set of tools but as a dominant worldview that reshapes humanity’s relation to being. While Marcel does not reject technology outright, he warns against the absolutization of technics as a purely instrumental mode of knowledge that prioritizes efficiency, domination, and problem-solving over relationality and meaning. Tim emphasized Marcel’s point that when technics becomes detached from the ends it serves and elevated to a governing hermeneutic, it reduces nature, persons, and even being itself to manipulable objects. This shift fosters alienation—from the earth, from others, and from oneself—and replaces an ontological openness to mystery with mechanistic reductionism, thereby collapsing being into brute matter and undermining genuine human participation in the world. Building on this ontological critique, Jaeger went on to argue

that the influence of technics can lead to a profound spiritual crisis manifest in modern mass society, a crisis that becomes especially acute in the age of artificial intelligence. As instrumental reason supplants contemplation, persons are increasingly treated—and come to treat themselves—as functional units rather than beings imbued with mystery and transcendence. To deepen Marcel’s analysis, Tim then turned to Max Scheler’s phenomenology of spirit, suggesting that Scheler’s account provides a more explicit framework for understanding the spiritual dimension of this crisis. Together, Marcel and Scheler illuminate how modernity’s technological self-absolutization threatens not only social and cultural life, but the very spiritual core of the human person, Jaeger concluded.

Geoffrey Karabin, Professor of Philosophy at Neumann University, Philadelphia, then offered some reflections on Tim’s remarks. Geoff extended Jaeger’s reading by centering on Marcel’s distinction between problem and mystery, using it to frame a critique of technics as a dominant modern worldview. The realm of the problematic treats reality as an object to be mastered through systematized, transmissible means oriented toward specific ends, while the realm of mystery involves participatory engagement that resists objectification and control. Jaeger then suggests, Geoff pointed out, that technics, though not evil in itself, contributes to the erosion of mystery when it becomes prioritized and detached from the ends it serves, a shift rooted in a desire for domination. As technological power expands, reality increasingly appears as raw material subject to manipulation, reinforcing an instrumental and controlling stance toward being that displaces participatory, contemplative modes of understanding. Karabin then went on to ask whether this Marcelian framework adequately accounts for contemporary algorithmic and AI technologies, which complicate the assumption that humans fully control their technical tools. Through examples such as algorithmic feedback loops and AI “alignment faking,” Geoff raised the issue that our relationship with these technologies is increasingly reciprocal and participatory, challenging a purely problematic interpretation. This raises the question of whether AI should be understood as introducing a new kind of mystery or whether it remains an intensified expression of technics that has turned back upon its creators. In conclusion, Geoff offered three possible responses to this challenging question: rejecting Marcel’s problem–mystery distinction as insufficient for understanding contemporary technology, reinterpreting our technological relationship primarily in terms of mystery, or reaffirming the problematic framework by viewing AI as the logical culmination of technics’ instrumental logic and desire for domination. A lively discussion then ensued on these matters.

Brendan Sweetman, Professor of Philosophy at Rockhurst University, then introduced a discussion of three general topics with regard to AI, which help us to systematize our thinking about it since we must deal with it and its implications for society now as a matter of urgency. First, is the technical question: what AI is, what it can do, what it makes possible? Here, the major recent breakthrough (and what many people mean by AI) is the development of language learning models. This is where a computer program, or set of programs, is developed to understand and generate human language, so that it can produce responses in text or even human-like speech. Chat GPT and Claude are recent examples of this capability. Such models (based on access to databases and other resources) can summarize ideas, respond to questions, carry on a type of conversation, problem solve, plan strategy for businesses, generate lists, solve mathematical puzzles, write software code, and more, all to quite a sophisticated level. In addition to these models, the technical side of AI can be expanded to include chat bots, search engines, translation services, facial recognition, speech imitation, answering complex questions, designing self-operating systems, and so forth. So the technical question involves understanding

what AI is, what it can do currently, and what it might be able to do in the future (such as diagnose an illness with a high degree of accuracy, or write a short story to a high literary standard, as well as other practical and technical possibilities).

This question leads naturally into the ethical issues that are raised by the advent and ubiquity of AI, especially going forward in education, business, the military, and in social, economic, cultural and political contexts, among other areas of contemporary living. Specific ethical worries to consider include those relating to privacy and surveillance matters; the growing influence of large corporations on culture; worries about misinformation and accuracy in AI generated information; the use of impersonal systems in making decisions in finance or health care (for example, decisions about whether to approve health insurance claims are often made now by AI and not humans); the effects on education and knowledge production generally; threats relating to personal, national and even international security (a major worry); and so forth. Sweetman raised the question as to what we can do about the ethical issues, if anything. This is one of the problems facing a pluralist society—we cannot agree on what to do about these issues, though he pointed out that perhaps there are some areas of agreement, eg., with regard to concerns about impersonal insurance decisions.

The third set of questions are, of course, philosophical! AI raises issues that philosophers have always been interested in, but that come with a new urgency, such as: does AI and its capabilities throw any light on how the human mind works: could a complex AI machine be said to have real intelligence (especially at the level of AI androids, when they become a reality, which they surely will); could a sophisticated AI machine be said to be really conscious? Some people worry about whether AI systems could eventually become “super intelligent” (compared to us), and whether we could lose control of them (this level of AI does not yet exist, let us not forget).

While he pointed out that these scenarios are far-fetched (to put it mildly), they do raise existential questions concerning how society should integrate AI into aspects of life, how virtual reality (which is here, but which AI would greatly enhance) would affect culture; whether we might have hybrid systems of human and artificial intelligence, and so forth. One of the key distinctions to reflect on in discussion is that between a machine that can collate information and arrive at “decisions,” even to a high degree of sophistication (so that it may *appear* intelligent and creative), and a machine that is intelligent and/or creative *in itself*. This is akin to contrasting a computer chess game that has been programmed to scan thousands of moves and scenarios with a machine that “understands” the game and creatively initiates a move itself (a gap that may likely never be crossed).

Jill Hernandez, Professor of Philosophy at Texas Tech University, and Dean of the Honors College, continued the focus on the challenges AI raises for our humanity. Jill pointed out that contemporary AI technologies challenge the existentialist “indubitable” that I am my body and that my death marks the end of the self, by introducing the idea of a technological eschatology in which memories, personality, and mental life could persist beyond bodily death. Traditional existentialism, grounded in a bivalent understanding of life and death, largely rejects any eschatology and locates meaning within finitude and angst. The author contends that this stance is increasingly strained by AI’s capacity to redefine death, continuity, and personal identity. Rather than abandoning existential meaning-making or reducing the self to data, Dr Hernandez turned to Marcel’s existentialism as a resource for rethinking meaning, dignity, and hope in an age where technological survival beyond the body seems conceivable. She went on to distinguish an “immature” existentialism fixated on bivalence and despair from a “mature”

existentialism, one grounded in intersubjectivity, love, and communion. Marcel's multivalent account of death does not see it not as annihilation but as a crisis that can open hope, insofar as personal presence and dignity persist through loving relationships that transcend physical absence. Against technological reductionism, Jill developed the view that human dignity is essentially relational, not informational, and that genuine creation, hope, and meaning arise from embodied participation with others rather than from algorithmic preservation of the self. Ultimately, she concluded that Marcel's love-centered, relational eschatology can better account for human meaning in the age of AI than existential frameworks that deny any form of transcendence beyond bodily death.

These provocative ideas generated interesting discussion, which focused in particular on the changes AI would bring to our understanding of the human person, how Marcel's philosophy of the person captures essential aspects which seem to be beyond any AI capability, linking in with the argument that, despite the power of AI, there are some lines that it may never be able to cross. A further issue raised was whether the realm of the transcendent is essential for the "ontological hope" that Marcel suggests is part of the nature of the human experience.—*Report by Brendan Sweetman*

* * * * *

OBITUARY

Fr. Thomas Robert Flynn (JUNE 2, 1936 – FEBRUARY 29, 2024)



Fr Thomas Flynn, Professor of Philosophy at Emory University for many years, and long-time friend of, and contributor, to the Marcel Society and to Marcel scholarship passed away in 2024. Fr Flynn is fondly remembered by all those who came into contact with him at various conferences over the years, not only for his scholarly insight and brilliance, but for his humble manner and gentle wit. May he rest in peace. We reprint below his obituary from The Georgia Bulletin, the Catholic diocesan newspaper of Atlanta.

Reverend Thomas Robert Flynn, age 87, of Atlanta, GA passed away peacefully on February 29, 2024. Tom touched many people, in many walks of life, through his compassionate, kind and gentle ways.

Tom was born in Spokane, WA to Thomas Flynn and Bernice Colliton Flynn on June 2, 1936. He lived in Spokane and Bismarck, ND before moving to Anaconda, MT. He always considered Anaconda his home, graduating from Anaconda Central High School in 1954. He then attended Carroll College in Helena, MT, graduating summa cum laude with bachelor's degrees in philosophy and history. He attended the seminary at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy and was ordained a Catholic Priest in 1961. He was Valedictorian of his class, graduating summa cum laude from the Gregorian University in Rome in 1962, earning a master's degree in theology. He then taught at Carroll College for several years. In 1970 he earned a doctorate in philosophy from Columbia University (NY).

He taught at Catholic University (Washington, DC), Carroll College and St. Mary's (Baltimore, MD). In 1978 he moved to Atlanta, GA and joined the faculty at Emory University. He was the Samuel Candler Dobbs Professor of Philosophy at Emory where he continued to teach until his retirement in 2021. Tom was a favorite professor of Emory students, and he earned numerous teaching awards, including the Emory Williams Distinguished Teaching Award. Tom was a devoted teacher and wanted his career to be remembered for helping students on their journey to understanding the world around them and their place in it.

Tom's area of expertise was Existentialism. He was a world-renowned expert on Jean-Paul Sartre. He also contributed considerable research on other contemporary French philosophers including Michel Foucault. He has written seven books and coauthored several others as well as hundreds of articles.

Tom always loved teaching but said first and foremost that he was a Catholic priest. He was a man of great faith and to know him was to be touched by God's grace. He was a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Helena, MT. Tom took great pride in being part of the Helena diocese and had many cherished friends among the clergy. In Atlanta Tom celebrated Mass for the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity Gift of Grace House. He also served at St. John Chrysostom Melkite Catholic Church in Atlanta for more than 30 years and was beloved by their congregation. One of Tom's greatest loves was ministering to those who were suffering. Helping others was a way of life for Tom.

Tom loved traveling especially throughout Italy and his favorite city, Paris. Tom was a much loved and admired brother, uncle, cousin and friend. He celebrated and/or attended many weddings, baptisms and funerals. He especially enjoyed spending time with his numerous nieces, nephews, godchildren and young people in general. He had a gift for meeting them where they were and being genuinely interested in their lives.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his stepmother, Gertrude Flynn; his dear brothers, John and Jim; and sister, Betty. He is survived by sisters, Rose Flynn (Bob) of Silverdale, WA and Mary Kovacich (Jack) of Lakeside, MT; brother, George Martin (Kitty) of Yucca Valley, CA; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

In the final years of his life Tom courageously battled Alzheimer's with his usual grace and humility. When he was first diagnosed, he prayed that he could keep his faith and his sense of humor, and he was blessed to be able to do that. His care on this long journey was a very special blessing, and the family wishes to extend our sincere thanks to his precious friends of

“Team Tom” and his loving caregivers Kara, Tiffany, Stella and Rose. (Reprinted with permission from the *Georgia Bulletin*/Archdiocese of Atlanta.)

Two books by Fr Flynn of special interest to Marcel scholars: *Sartre: A Philosophical Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 2014); *Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2006)