Ultimately, the two authors have done a huge service to the intellectual world. Not only have they collected and translated previously unavailable documents concerning Foucault's involvement in Iran, they have provided a useful discussion of the themes, dominant in Foucault's work, that rise to prominence in his discussion of the revolution. More important, they have showed the danger not of intellectuals commenting on politics but of poorly thought out, sloppy, and ill-informed Orientalism. This alone makes their book a timely intervention.

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Music and Philosophy
GABRIEL MARCEL
Trans. Stephen Maddux and Robert E. Wood

"Philosophical thought can no longer, without being in danger of losing all its effectiveness, be dissociated from a reflection on the work of art," Gabriel Marcel insists, and the works he reflects on are most frequently musical ones (135). As Robert E. Wood explains in his introduction to these collected essays, the analogy that Marcel himself develops to explain the primacy and centrality of music to his thinking is a geographical one: his philosophy is the continent, his plays are the off-shore islands, and music is the sea out of which they both emerge. Maddux and Wood's aim in making these essays available to English-speaking readers is to correct critical inattention within the philosophical community to the inextricability of music and philosophy in Marcel's thought. In doing so, they also hope to draw philosophical attention to the ways in which music can both model and contribute to a richer awareness of the world in which we find ourselves. Marcel contends that music provides this basis through the sense of connectedness that one can get from participation in community. Indeed, participation is the very thing that, for him, characterizes our human project, a more social and ethically engaged existentialism than the caricature that comes down to us through popularizations of Jean-Paul Sartre's thinking.

The essays contained in this volume were written over a span of forty-five years, from 1920 to 1965, and they clearly reflect Marcel's engagement with the phenomenology and existentialism that dominated European philosophy between the interwar and post-World War II eras. Wood notes that Marcel's philosophical reading of Roman Catholicism, rendering his faith into a more accessible philosophical discourse, bears a
resemblance to Martin Buber’s translation of Hassidic Judaism into philosophy. This resemblance is indeed there—Marcel’s theorizing of the communion that music makes possible, for instance, depends on a non-objectivizing relation to the Other that, in Buber, is presented as the “I-Thou” relation—but one can also draw fruitful parallels to contributions by Heidegger and Sartre. These associations establish Marcel as a significant figure in European philosophical circles of the mid-twentieth century and speak to the necessity of this long overdue collection of essays. Here, in Marcel’s writings, we find elucidation of three influential insights of this period: the deep appreciation of the subjectivity of the Other that preoccupied Buber and Levinas, the metaphysical power of art which is the topic of Heidegger’s “ Origin of the Work of Art,” and the commitment to theorizing from concrete, everyday experiences which Sartre celebrated as the great virtue of existentialism.

In the book’s first essay, “Music in My Life and My Work,” (chronologically his latest, written in 1965), Marcel takes up this existentialist methodology most explicitly and develops his philosophical insights out of autobiography. He understands philosophy as a search for transcendence, for spiritual knowledge, and recalls his early experience of spirituality as constituted through music. This essay is not an elaboration of a general theory of music, but an account of how musical experience developed his philosophical thought, and his careful attention here to the personal experience of “becoming” most clearly shows Marcel as an existentialist thinker, albeit one who, like most placed in that category, rejects the label. “[I]t was with music as a starting point,” he tells us, “that I was led to reflect on Being or to affirm Being” (46). Later in the book, in a 1943 essay titled “Music According to Saint Augustine,” Marcel asserts that only in phenomenology can we develop a philosophy of musical experience, and in 1927’s “Music Understood and Music Experienced” he claims that the essence of a musical structure “is not even essence except insofar as it is capable of being experienced” (101), recalling Sartre’s classic existentialist dictum that existence precedes essence.

Marcel’s thesis concerning the metaphysical power of art is discussed in a number of these essays, but it is most intriguingly presented in his cryptic comment that “[a]uthority is the distinguishing mark of a work of art” (71). The French word “autorité” has its etymological root in the Latin “auctor,” which implies that the work of art possesses and is distinguished by the capacity to be an originary or founding event. Understood in this way, Marcel’s 1920 notion of the work of art resembles Heidegger’s thesis that artworks found worlds, a correspondence that is emphasized elsewhere by Marcel’s more specific discussion of music and musical universes. “[T]o help live; to help bring
things to life: such is the sacred function of ... music,” Marcel declares (79). Indeed Marcel thinks that the value of a musical idea can, as a rule of thumb, be gauged by the ability it has to reveal new facets of itself over time; the idea which is immediately fully obvious is, he says, rarely the most valuable. Clarifying, or perhaps correcting, Heidegger’s contention that language is the house of Being, Marcel argues in a 1940 essay that music goes beyond even poetry: a poem only imperfectly survives translation, if at all, whereas music can be “an interpreter between peoples” (105). It also carries with it a need to be performed, to be “begun again” or reinterpreted in each new performance, such that it is at the same time transcending its performer and depending on him or her to bring out its fullest existence (107).

In opening up a space for interpersonal communion, music reveals itself as a ground not just for metaphysics and epistemology but for value theory also. Through their music, musicians create worlds into which they invite and initiate their audiences, Marcel claims. In this mystery of music we encounter the mystery of presence, which Marcel describes in 1940 as “the sudden emergence” of a form capable of creating and announcing itself (112–3). This suggests to Marcel that perhaps there is no real difference between presence and freedom, a convergence that is particularly acute in improvisation where we see the notion of “liberty” taking on its most authentic meaning. This is so precisely because the practice of musical improvisation constructs a radically open space where possibilities are offered, considered, and contested on a greater scale than one typically finds in, say, public discourse. The “being transported” which Marcel identifies in music-making is a profoundly ethical moment in which he relates to the other as Thou, not a perception of the other as object, but a deep appreciation of the other’s subjectivity.

Marcel’s attention to musical improvisation makes this collection relevant to audiences beyond the one the translators envision. No doubt English-speaking readers of existentialism will find these essays useful in illuminating Marcel’s contributions, but I think theorists of musical improvisation will also derive great value from his work. Improvisation theory is an emerging interdisciplinary discourse drawing on scholarship in musicology, cultural studies, and philosophy, and these essays could augment work currently being done on the community-building functions of improvised music. In particular, Marcel’s account of his personal experience of improvising provides a perspective that brings together philosophical analysis and a musician’s phenomenology. Improvisation theory’s attention to interconnections of aesthetics, ethics, and politics profits from descriptions of holism and solidarity in music of the kind Marcel presents when he writes about his improvisations as not really
coming from him and not really coming from outside him, but existing instead in a space where the distinction between inside and outside loses meaning. For those who believe, as I do, that the "rigor" of studying value theory components in isolation from each other is a false one, believing instead that a critical analysis is better conducted when the links between ethics, politics, and aesthetics are foregrounded, this book offers a great deal of food for thought.

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H. C. for life, That Is to Say...

JACQUES DERRIDA

Trans. Laurent Milesi and Stefan Herbrechter


Jacques Derrida situates his tribute to Hélène Cixous, H. C. for life, That is to Say..., within the literary tradition of the palinode—and indeed this text is best read as a work that resonates and performs like a poem. When read through this form, a poem in all its musicality (ode, "song") defined by retraction and repetition (palin, "again"), Derrida's autobiographical anecdotes, philosophical close-readings, and more general assertions about the monumental importance of Cixous's project have an apparent, thematizable structure—a beautiful but also necessary attribute, for this piece has no chapters, no subtitles, no explicit divisions. The palinodic structure is thematizable because of its double movement: contained in recantation is a withdrawal aligned with death, and the grace of another beginning, for what was said can be miraculously replaced with other words, another direction, new life. Such a meaningful structure is continuous with Derrida's premise in a work that takes its place as yet another rich conversation with his close friend of over three decades: an exploration of the differences between the two thinkers's conceptions of death (and life). While previous conversations can be overheard in works such as Voiles (1998) and Rêve, je te dis (2003), this piece is an important contribution to scholarship on Cixous's literary achievements. Derrida attends in particular to Le Prénom de Dieu (1967), the novel to which he had originally planned to limit his address, in addition to Les Commencements (1970), Ananké (1979), Jours de l'an (1990), and OR, les lettres de mon père (1997), while he also makes reference to La Baleine de Jonas (1970), Le Troisième Corps (1970), La (1979), Illa (1980), Mémoires d'aveugle : L'autoportrait et autres ruines (1990), L'Ange au secret (1991), Beethoven à jamais ou l'existence de
In this article the author expresses the view that a confrontation between music and literature must not be limited to an opposition of an art of words and an art of sounds. Rather, there is one unique universe of sounds, dependent upon two different kinds of writing: the musical, and the literary. Read more.