

MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND GABRIEL MARCEL ON AUTHENTIC MOMENTS

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The guiding quest of this presentation is to speak to the possibility of the movement from existential participation to interpersonal communion. In so doing, Martin Heidegger's call to conscience is viewed in relation to Gabriel Marcel's interpersonal communion. Marcel approaches this experience in terms of spiritual availability. It is a field of vibration, an aura of affective unity, where each knows the other as intimately as one knows oneself.

Spontaneity displays the quality of life in this lighting up; it is authentic in the spirit of truth. The authentic as Heidegger has used the term, calls one back from the anonymous to oneself. Heidegger and Marcel both speak about a kind of authentic moment, an encounter that opens up existence in a moment of revelation. For Heidegger it is the call to conscience and for Marcel it is the experience of interpersonal communion. This allows for the possibility of self-transcendence where consciousness expands and further horizons emerge.

It takes courage and passion to affirm one's existence as sacred. Sincerity helps bond and strengthen the faith in the other. Sincerity implies an investment of self. It is to stand behind one's acts with commitment. Sincerity is something that wells up and comes forward from the depths of being. It is not directed merely at the other but to oneself, to one's existence in a given act of truth.

Heidegger approaches the authentic mode of being by posing a similar formulation of being oneself, who one is; authentically one faces the possibility of non-being. This voice calls the everyday self back to the authentic Self. Being faces non-being. Yet, *Dasein* is already in a world with others, a being-with-others. Being-alone is described as a deficient mode of being-with-others.

Marcel then is asking how does one move from this moment of authenticity of being facing non-being to the authenticity of interpersonal communion. Heidegger does not expand the call to conscience to the dimension of the interpersonal but stays with *Dasein*. Yet, Heidegger has presupposed that the other is an ontological fact of the world, a constitutive structure of existence.

Now, the question is posed in a new light: how does one come to reside in a primarily inauthentic mode of existence? From this view, existence is within limited horizons closing off possibilities. For Heidegger

Dasein resides within the inauthentic, the “they” predominating existence. Consequently, moments of authenticity are not commonplace or consistently present in consciousness but rather stand forward as particularly significant.

An appeal sent forth by another, to become responsible for what one is and can become might be experienced as a moment of existential crisis. One is required to give up, to lay down self-consciousness to expand the horizons of consciousness, to transcend the limited boundaries imposed by clinging to anxiety-laden formulations of self-importance and autonomous existence. Authentic possibility within is then residing in the name of another’s being able to affirm existence. This being able to, frees one to become one’s ownmost authentic possibilities. It does not imply that all negativity is to be removed but is a passionate transcendence. It seems that passion is required to help move through hardship to provide strength and endurance in moments of existential crisis.