

Jim Finley: Greetings. I'm Jim Finley.

Kirsten Oates: And I'm Kirsten Oates.

Jim Finley: Welcome to Turning to the Mystics.

Kirsten Oates: Welcome, everyone, to season 11 of Turning to the Mystics where we're turning to the philosophy of Gabriel Marcel. And I'm here with Jim to discuss his first session. Welcome, Jim.

Jim Finley: Yes. Kirsten, good to be together again.

Kirsten Oates: I loved the first session. Thank you so much. And you were really trying to set the tone and offer up the vision of Marcel. You always help us understand these mystics tend to have a vision aspect and a path aspect, and in this first session you're really helping us get an insight into the vision of Marcel.

Jim Finley: That's correct. That's right.

Kirsten Oates: And where you started was you said, "What makes Marcel accessible is that he's inviting us to become more aware of the quality of our awareness." And I wanted to just dig a little deeper into this idea of awareness because when I think about awareness, I'm thinking about right now I can be aware of what I'm seeing, what I'm hearing, the temperature in the room. I could be aware of I'm a little hungry. What is this awareness that Marcel is talking about.

Jim Finley: Yes, he's making a distinction. Distinction, the way he phrases it is between primary and secondary reflection. So primary reflection is just we're just aware of what's consciously, factually obvious and true. So for example, right now it's five minutes till 10 or right now it's a certain date or right now I need to turn the heat up in the room or right now my cellphone. Just there's that awareness. Secondary awareness is the awareness of realizing the inadequacy of primary awareness as being adequate to live by. And we become aware of its inadequacy by being established in secondary awareness, a presence. The depth of our presence is not reducible to a set of facts.

Jim Finley: So it's in that meditative, reflective interior state that we acknowledge primary awareness which is the proper realm of science, the problematic, the objective, it's real. But in terms of the quality of my sense of who I am about life, about presence, about the beautiful, about the things we seek to live by that gives meaning to our life, the quality is this secondary awareness, which is a reflective meditative state of being more present to oneself and to others.

Kirsten Oates: That's helpful. So the awareness he's talking about is this reflective meditative state and that state reveals the inadequacy of this primary consciousness.

Jim Finley: That's right. So even right now, even what we're doing right now, we could just say he talks about the awareness of our awareness and just move on. And we say, "No, that doesn't work." What do we just say? What's it mean? So he's constantly inviting us to slow down to experientially step into the depth of the actual presence of ourselves here, exploring the quality of our awareness. So he always has this experiential immediacy about him that opens out onto mystery.

Kirsten Oates: That's helpful. And so this is the tricky territory because the more I ask you to define awareness, I'm actually inviting you into primary reflection and the problematic. So this awareness he's talking about is in the realm of mystery.

Jim Finley: That's right. It's like asking a poet to define or to explain in conceptual terms what the poem means. Or, again, the example that we used earlier, when two people love each other, one says to the other, I love you. They don't say, "Define your terms. Where did you read that? Let me write that down. I had no idea." And so it's this interior language of lovers of poets with the child and so on. Like Richard Rohr, how to turn information into transformation. And the transformation is the qualitative deepening of our attentiveness to the presence of ourselves in the moment that we're exploring, which just really sheds light on the interior depth dimensions of ourselves, of others. Really the depth dimension of life itself.

Kirsten Oates: And this isn't to say the realm of primary reflection isn't necessary or it's just inadequate to give us access to meaning to the discovery of who we really are.

Jim Finley: That's exactly right. So it's not irrelevant what time it is we started the session. It's relevant because I wasn't aware of it. I would've shown up to be here. And when I go to the grocery store, it's not irrelevant when I get there what I came to get because I have to... What am I going to have for dinner? So it isn't that it's irrelevant at all, it's just that we now get stuck at that level as if we're a function just a series of functions.

Jim Finley: And losing function to the standpoint that we lose a sense of presence. And also we're losing a sense of what we can adequately explain by defining it and we lose a sense of what we can't explain because it's not explainable, it's not definable. Love is not ultimately explainable. It's not ultimately definable, but it's not irrelevant because it's not definable. It's beyond what can be defined.

Jim Finley: And so this is this philosophical, poetic language that bears witness to these dimensions of ourselves. Because he says it must really come to the realm of thought. There must be a way of thinking it that doesn't reduce it to an object, but it allows us to experientially reflect like we're doing right now. And this is the language of mystics. It's the words of Jesus. It's the words of lovers, of poets, the cries of the poor. It's this kind of experiential interior depth dimension of the presence of ourself, of others and of all things.

- Jim Finley: And also, that we're present and we sense that we're present subsisting in a presence is what we're going to be moving towards, the thou dimension. See this boundary list. So that's becoming aware of the quality of our awareness.
- Kirsten Oates: Beautiful. So that final step you just took, which is there's a quality of presence that opens up onto... that we're existing inside of a presence or we're being co-presence or... Yeah.
- Jim Finley: So here's a core theme of this vision aspect. So the problematic or the objective we're saying is that which is dualistically other than ourself. It's the problem we want to solve. And examples we were using is our roof is leaking or the car won't start because there's a problem. Next we seek a method to solve the problem to get the answer. Also in mathematics is a problem. How do I get the answer to this math problem?
- Jim Finley: And then once we solve the problem or get the answer, we're done, we move on. And that's important. How do to get the car started because you needed to go to work. He said, but with presence it's different because he said, what happens then in secondary reflection in the person is whatever I turn towards and turning towards it, I realize that who I am with the very presence of myself is included in what I'm turning towards. This is mystery.
- Jim Finley: So when I ask what is love? It's me and my capacity for love, my desire for love, my gratitude for love, that's asking what is love? When I ask what is consciousness, it's me and my own consciousness asking what is consciousness? And so consciousness and love at present aren't problems. They're mysteries. But here's the key to Marcel, you're saying. It's not reductionistically a mystery in that everything is reduced to my subjective opinion. Everything includes me and that it's reducible to my subjective opinion or my attitude or my... It's the opposite.
- Jim Finley: It includes me when I ask what is consciousness and that my very self is included in the mystery of consciousness. It isn't just that I'm asking what is my feelings of love, my experiences of love, but rather my very self extends out into and is woven into the mystery of love itself. And ultimately he's going to say woven into the mystery of being and he's going to ultimately say that it's infinite. But my very presence extends out into and is woven into the presence of God whose infinite presence is woven into me as myself. And so that's the expansive vision of Gabriel Marcel which is the vision of religious consciousness. It's the vision of all the mystics, but he's exploring it as philosophy.
- Kirsten Oates: Wonderful. And we'll keep coming back to that because that's a big concept to unpack and Gabriel Marcel says that the pathway to unpacking that or the pathway to becoming more aware of our awareness or more present to this presence, it's supported by kind of attitude. And you read from a quote of Marcel's and it's on page two of the book we're using, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel by Kenneth Gallagher and it's in the second paragraph that starts with to gloss over this aspect and it's the last couple of sentences.

Kirsten Oates: So you said, Jim, that the attitude of interrogation is at the same time an attitude of listening. And the manner of listening is strangely tranquil, unafraid, patient and expectant. And I'd like to just dwell a little bit on those words that he offers us, the quality of those words. If you wouldn't mind helping us unpack them a little bit.

Jim Finley: Let's take these moments where this awareness of which he speaks is happening. For example, the example we used in the midst of nature is sitting in the presence we're given over to the beauty of a sunset that's giving itself over to us, where the quietness that's evoked in us in an art museum where we quietly move and sit with each piece and so on. Or the pause between two lines of a poem.

Jim Finley: It's strangely tranquil because we're resting in it. It isn't like we're off somewhere else. We're not trying to figure it out so we can get onto the next thing. We're not trying to get onto anything else at all. It's a certain kind of inner tranquility that comes over us in the presence of the sunset or the friend or the sound of the rain or whatever it is that evokes it. It's like a pausing in sequential time to be present and it brings with it a certain sense of interior peace or tranquility.

Kirsten Oates: Which Jim doesn't mean you're not active because I know in past seasons too, you've talked about also when you're called into a particular kind of work, like if you're called to be a teacher or you're called to be someone fighting for justice, you can have that inner tranquility.

Jim Finley: That's right. And that's where we get into the path part. In other words, it is in these moments of this awareness that we then say, "Well, then how do I habitually stabilize this awareness in my passage through time and the quality of my presence to how I'm serving the community or I'm serving this person, or I'm present to this animal, or I'm true to, to life sitting at the deathbed of the dying loved one?"

Jim Finley: "I have to carry it through this pause of a timeless attentiveness, a pause in sequential time needs to be lived in time. And therefore in the midst of the rise, in the fall of my activity, hopefully I do so in an underlying interior groundedness, in the presence of sustaining me in the rise and fall of the activity that I'm in," is another big thing for Marcel. In real life too, I think that's just so true.

Kirsten Oates: That's really helpful. So these moments that we can pause and really notice this experience and the path is how we might carry it through.

Jim Finley: That's right.

Kirsten Oates: I see how...

Jim Finley: And the next thing, so I'm afraid. This is why I say God is a presence that protects us from nothing even as God unexplainably sustains us in all things. In the arms of the beloved in the setting sun lying in the dark, listening to our breathing, whatever it is, a fear has no foundations. It's just a kind of quiet presence. And I'm so woven into the presence so woven into me. There's no basis for fear in it.

Kirsten Oates: And that's where death tips over into the realm of mystery.

Jim Finley: That's exactly right. This going to be very... When he talks about love, he talks about we know we've loved someone when we've seen in them that which is too beautiful to die. Likewise, he would say, "We've learned to love ourselves when we realize that in us as two..." Our body dies, but who we know ourself to be in this step dimension is immortal. It's the eternality of ourself. There were manifestations of an eternal presence that never passes away that's endlessly woven into all this endlessly passing away. That's the mystery where time and eternity keep touching each other.

Kirsten Oates: Yeah, beautiful. Patient is the next word.

Jim Finley: Yeah. I'm patient because what's the rush? In other words, where am I going to go?

Kirsten Oates: It's infinite.

Jim Finley: I think in meditation, I think that's why we sit still. We don't sit still to settle in. We sit still, there's no place to go. Did everything I could ever hope for is the very depth dimension of this place I'm in right now? To be present. In Buddhism, there's statues of the Buddha seated in a lotus posture. One hand is on one knee with this palm upward. The other one is touching the earth. He claims the place that he's sitting like I'm very present. And so it has that patience about it. There's a kind of a quietness.

Jim Finley: And really I think it's the patience of the eternality of the present moment. Like Teresa of Avila, she talks about patience obtains all things because very, very soon now we'll all be dead, but we'll all be dead and that will be an unveiled oneness with the infinite love that's quietly giving itself to our heart when we sit here. So a time and eternity are intermingled in this patience, to be patient this way.

Jim Finley: And expectant, the last one. Sometimes this richness we're speaking of is very profound. I mean it's very... There's moments like that sometimes, but usually it's very, very subtle. And here's the point. We sense it's endlessness or expectant of yet even more layers of unexplained richnesses are yet to come. I'm in an arc of an unfolding expectancy and I'm in the midst of the expectancy of endless enrichment. It's inexhaustible. I'm in the very midst of that which cannot be exhausted and I'm in the midst of it. And it's in the midst of me.

Kirsten Oates: The expectant makes me think of... It's kind of the opposite of clinging. So rather than-

Jim Finley: Yes, it is.

Kirsten Oates: ... "I've found it, I've got it, I can cling to it. I remain expectant that it can deepen and go on forever."

Jim Finley: Rollo May in Existential Psychotherapy, he says, "I'm having the experience that every experienced clinician has had many times. I'm looking over the notes of a patient that I'm going to see in a minute that I've never met their diagnosis on DSM and all of that, depression, anxiety, whatever it is." He said, "But when they come walking into the room, I'm surprised. You don't look like your diagnosis." He said, "There's no such thing as the foreseeability of an encounter with the person." The etymology, there was surprise, is I'm taken from above in the presence of the person that transcends the diagnosis that they're working on. And that's the expectancy.

Jim Finley: And sometimes then you get used to being surprised. You're like a quietly, habitually surprised person. You're habitually taken from above by the miracle of the incomprehensible stature of standing up and sitting down. This way you get ever more refined in this kind of sensitivity.

Kirsten Oates: I love that. What was the word to be an ongoing surprised person?

Jim Finley: That's right. You're endlessly, quietly surprised.

Kirsten Oates: Endlessly surprised. Yeah, that's beautiful. I love that. We're trying to... Even in going through those words, Jim, there's a way we're going deeper into the words, but we're not entering that realm of the problematic or the primary consciousness as you deepen us into the words. It's because you're speaking out of that deeper place. And that's what Marcel is really trying to help us get to.

Jim Finley: All the while the problematic is still there. It's life. And by the way, the problematic has its own surprise because when we're looking for an answer and we finally get it, we're delighted and surprised like, "Wow, my car starts. or wow, two plus two equals, oh god, equals four." But the surprise is momentary until we move on to the next problem and we get surprised. But this now we're speaking of is it's not momentary because we saw something. It's like a momentary realization of the eternity of the present moment.

Jim Finley: It's a subtlety of St. Augustine once said about time, we all know, he said, I know what time is until you ask me to explain what it is. I can't explain time. So it's like that. It's like a self-evident intimations of the unexplainable. It's like two people love each other talking about love. Neither one would claim they can adequately define their love. It doesn't mean, they're confused.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: Rather they're in the presence of that which is undefined and undefinable, which gives meaning to everything that they do.

Kirsten Oates: And it's so subtle this difference because even though I'm asking you to further define each of these words, you're not defining them in the realm of the problematic, you're defining them in the realm of mystery. And that's I think what you were saying earlier about how thought can get infused in that realm of mystery. So when I ask you tell us more about tranquil, you say something that takes us deeper into that experience of the tranquil.

Jim Finley: That's right. Marcel points out, he said, there's something about thought that tends to want to keep us in the problematic. There was just something about thought that has us asking a question that we expect to find an answer. That's why I like this quote from Thomas Merton where he said, "When people first get involved in the interior life, they have many questions, and they try to get answers to their questions, which is well and good." But as they get into it... Here's where it gets Marcelian like Marcel. As they get into it, they discover here all along, here God is the one asking the question.

Jim Finley: And it's not just that they don't know the answer to God's question, they don't understand the question and that's humility. That's this interiority. If we're just patient and then sit with it, there's like this enrichment of the qualifying deepening of the quality of our presence subsisting in this presence. This presencing itself is who we are right in that moment sitting here like this.

Kirsten Oates: That theme of humility is common across many of the mystics we looked at. And I did want to read the quote you had from Marcel, which is in chapter one, The Winding Path. And it's in the paragraph that starts on page five. Now Marcel declares that at the origin of philosophy there must be an attitude of humility, of ontological humility. So I might get you to unpack that word For us and help us understand ontological humility.

Jim Finley: Yeah. The word ontology means being, and so being for Marcel is like the infinite mystery of reality itself. The infinite presence of presence itself. I was going to point out that ultimately it's clear that this being of which he speaks is God, but he's trying to stay free from any doctrinal formulation. He's trying to see the presence of God and the infinity of life itself.

Jim Finley: It isn't just that I'm in the presence of God and that God is present to me, but rather it isn't that I am in the presence of God and that I'm in a relationship with God and God is in a relationship with me, but it's realizing this, that God's relationship with me is the reality of me that's a mystery. And then we're humbled like the reins fall from our hands. We don't know what to make of it. My very person is the very manifestation of the unmanifested presence of God

and I'm humbled by it. Never humiliated, but endlessly humbled with amazement like I don't know what to make of it.

Kirsten Oates: Beautiful. I think for those of us who were given a really poor image of God as a person, that as a man, as a man with a white beard or that somehow we were infused with that image. Marcel is just a breath of fresh air approaching it from this philosophical standpoint. It's really helped me to rid myself completely of those kind of images that a lot of us got when we were young.

Jim Finley: And when you really listen, and I'm saying in the Christian dispensation, but this is true of all the world religions. That's what they say that no idea of God is God. Every idea of God is infinitely less than God. God's not reducible to any idea, but it's really in the realms of love and in the realms of presence that it passes beyond.

Jim Finley: It's just like Gabriel Marcel is going to say, you can't define yourself either. You're not definable. You are not reducible to your idea of yourself or to life. And therefore Marcel liberates us from those kind of impoverished or claustrophobic things that they're like sadly foolish in a way to open up to that. We're in the presence of that which evokes a sense of awe or sense of amazement or immense gratitude that we cannot and don't need to explain. But we can intimately realize what we can't explain. And that's Marcel, that's Jesus and that's the mystics and it's....yeah.

Kirsten Oates: And we find it in reality itself.

Jim Finley: We do. Because this is reality itself. That's what he's bringing us to.

Kirsten Oates: Yes.

Jim Finley: Yeah.

Kirsten Oates: We don't find it from praying to some far off entity in another realm. Yeah.

Jim Finley: That's right. See, because even... We're seeing this in the Merton talk too that Merton says, "The support... Very helpful to know that when we die, we don't go anywhere." Like orbit the Earth a few times to take off. In God, we live and move and have our being. We're living our life in the vast interiority of God. So all the angels are here, all the dead are here, the eternal life of the dead. And we'll be joining them soon enough.

Jim Finley: Even before we die, we can in these interior meditative love-infused states, realize this interiority of what's unexplainably sacred and present. And presencing the self is our very presence, the presence of the sun moving across the sky, the passage of time. It's like that.

Jim Finley: Turning to the Mystics will continue in a moment.



Kirsten Oates: Okay. I am going to try and tackle the realm of mystery with you.

Jim Finley: All right.

Kirsten Oates: And so this idea that you pointed out that the realm of mystery as a human, we're asking what it means to be human. It's consciousness asking about consciousness and that leaves us in the realm of mystery. And these are my words, so tell me how this sounds, but it's something I can't get outside of. So I can't get outside-

Jim Finley: That's true.

Kirsten Oates: ... of the fact that I'm existing in my human self. I can't get outside of my own consciousness and view it from afar.

Jim Finley: That's true.

Kirsten Oates: And is that what puts it into the realm of mystery?

Jim Finley: Yes. That'd be a good way to put it, really. See, I can't get outside of it because my very self is the immediate manifested presence of the boundaryless interiority, that alone is real. You can't see over here is reality and let's step outside of reality to take a look at reality. You can't get outside of reality because it's always within reality, we're exploring reality. And that's the intimacy of the mystery that evokes wonder or presence and so on.

Kirsten Oates: And that's a key point you just made. So I can feel that in my own personal subjective experience like you say that you were talking about earlier, subjectively, I can see I can't get outside myself or outside my consciousness, but that leads me into this, I can't get outside of reality and within the entirety of reality, I'm a part of it. I'm one with it.

Jim Finley: That's right. Here's another way too that I think has helped me to see this, put this way about Marcel. This is for all the mystics. When I speak of myself... We spoke about this before in previous sessions. When I speak of myself, there's the self of myself. I say I'm worried about myself, I'm proud of myself, I'm ashamed of myself, of who I am in my own reflective consciousness.

Jim Finley: But then if I ask if that's the self of myself, the self that I see, what's the my of myself? Who's the me who sees me? At its first levels, the my of myself is the internalized self of myself. I internalize experiences, I internalize answers, and I project them. At a certain level, that's how the ego works. But in deep meditative states and the quietness of these moments, in deep meditative states, the my of myself becomes more and more non-distinguished from the infinity of the infinite self of God, infinitely presencing and giving itself to me as the mystery of the my of myself.

Jim Finley: And that trans-subjective communion for Marcel, that's reality. And then there's another big thing about Marcel. What he's trying to do the wisdom path. Marcel thought Gallagher is very Augustinian that, "I might know myself and the O Lord, only this and nothing more, absolutely nothing more." That God has made our hearts in such a way that nothing less than an infinite union with the infinite love will ever be enough to put to rest, the restless loneliness of our heart is a setup that our suffering is we're trapped in the problematic.

Jim Finley: We're trapped in a claustrophobic one-dimensional thing where we believe, and this is a reactivity, that the outcome of the situation is the authority to name who I am. And so he is trying to heal us. There's like a constellation of philosophy like he's trying to bring us to this healing of being habitually stabilized. And this boundarylessness of the mystery and beauty of ourself of everyone really is manifested presences of the infinite presence of being of God.

Kirsten Oates: Beautiful.

Jim Finley: Yeah.

Kirsten Oates: That's helpful. And I think, Jim, you said despair arises when we remain in the realm of the problematic.

Jim Finley: Yes. See, because if I'm nothing but the self things happen to... I'm going to go St. Augustine again. He said, "Wisdom consists of understanding and what true happiness consists and how to find it." His wisdom. And then he concludes that, "In order therefore for true happiness to be true happiness, it has to be eternal because if the only happiness I have is the happiness that ends in the fleetingness of my life and death. My happiness is always fragile and temporary and that's not true happiness." And so that's what Marcel is trying to do here.

Jim Finley: He's trying to find our way to a state of interior intuitive realizations or intimations of an eternal boundaryless presence. This presencing itself is the mystery of our very presence. Realizing these different modalities in nature and intimacy, and solitude, and silence, and beauty, and service, and so on. Salvation, salvific knowledge.

Kirsten Oates: Do I want to come back to this word trans-subjective. What Marcel is pointing to is this trans-subjective experience. Just like the realm of the problematic which is real in its own right and important in its own right. There's the realm of the objective and even the subjective. The realm of the subjective, which is real in its own right and really important. So we're not trying to override the ego and subjective experience, we're just saying there's something deeper that gives our life meaning and purpose and takes us out of realms of despair because it's infinite and eternal.

Jim Finley: Yeah. This is another big insight here, which is key to all the mystics too and faith and so on, is that in the problematic order, there is the reality of me in a

relationship with that which is not me. I'm not my car because it won't start. I'm not the roof that's leaking and so on. And that's real. But Romano Guardini, the Catholic writer, Romano Guardini has a succinct way of saying it.

Jim Finley: "I'm not any of you, but neither am I dualistically other than any of you either. I'm not the earth, I'm not, but neither am I dualistically other than the earth either. And I'm not God. But neither am I dualistically other than God. I'm subsisting like light subsisting the flame in the trans-subjective unity of intimately realized reality."

Jim Finley: Cardinal Newman says, "I'm a link in a chain. I cannot be thrown away. I'm woven into the interconnectedness that's ultimately infinite woven into us." And that's trans-subjectivity.

Kirsten Oates: Wonderful. By season 11, we might be getting a little closer to understanding trans-subjective reality.

Jim Finley: Yeah. I think we're getting closer to realizing the folly of figuring it out, but we're getting closer, although we can't figure it out. We're so grateful for the intimations of putting words to what we're resting in. That's what I think the value of these reflections.

Kirsten Oates: And Marcel gives us a beautiful lens to talk about this trans-subjective experience and he talks about the "I thou" experience. And so, Jim, maybe you'll expand on that a little bit.

Jim Finley: The example that we use, we'll expand on it. This will be repeated through fidelity, hope and love as an habitual state. The example that we use is that when we love someone, this is the key is who we know someone to be when we love them. So when we love them, we do know in the problematic order of what's factually true about them, what they look like, what their history is as they told us what their personality is. All that is real. But who we know them to be in our love for them is thou.

Jim Finley: And here he's echoing Martin Buber, the Jewish mystic and philosopher, "I it and I thou." So it is true that the beloved is it that is there's the factual realities and facts of father, mother, sister, brother, lover, spouse, friend, and grandparents, or whatever. But who we know them is thou fills the entire horizon of our being. And Marcel says the response isn't explaining anything. He says, "We're just moved and loved. What we say is be with me." And what we see really another way of looking at it is we see the presence of the beloved is an incarnate manifested presence of the infinite presence of God manifesting itself as the presence of the beloved as thou, is the beloved to the generosity of God is worth all that God is worth. And the beloved is nothingness without God. It quietly unexplainably shines this way, thou.

Jim Finley: Then Marcel says, "It isn't possible to be one with the thou of the other without realizing that you're also one with the thou of yourself. Because it's only the thou in you that can see the thou of the other." And the next level is, is that when the beloved sees that you're seeing them in this way, you reveal them to themselves as thou. And then when they return to favor and you realize that you're thou's thou, see, you got something.

Jim Finley: So what if then... This is mystical marriage. And we talk about the thou dimensions of all of reality really, the thou of silence, the thou of an animal, the thou of life, the thou of flowers of art. Thou. But we realized each unto each, unto one another. We realize then this is the truth of ourselves. And then we're called to live by it. This is where we're getting at on the path. It comes to us as a moment. So it's a moment. TS Eliot was talking about this too, about time and eternity.

Jim Finley: So there's a certain timeless moment of the realization of thou, but the timeless moment of tasting thou transcending time must be carried out and lived in time. Otherwise it's just a fleeting moment. See, and that's the real question. See, how do I transcend? The moment where I transcend time, how can I habitually be established in the moment that transcends time through all the time of my life? And it's like a call and this is where Marcel is headed. This is a path that how do we go about living like this becoming such a person?

Kirsten Oates: Very reminiscent what you were just saying then of TS Eliot's line, which I've carried forward from season 10, "Only in time is time conquered."

Jim Finley: That's right. So he said there's a certain... This is so Marcelian too. So there are certain moments, remember in TS Eliot, "To be conscious is not to be in time." And then he gives very stunningly simple examples. Like, "It starts to rain and you run under a grape arbor and there huge drops of water hitting on the leaves overhead. We're being in a draughty church at smoke fall." There's certain hallowed moments of pausing in a certain effulgence or unexplainable fullness this way.

Jim Finley: But then they tend to be elusive, that as the cellphone goes off, we're already late for the next meeting. You know what life is like. So then the question is, well, how then... Since we can't make these moments happen, how do we do this? And this is where he gets into... So you find your practice and practice it. There's the daily rendezvous of a quiet fidelity where there's no agenda but this. And by the way then, when we read Marcel's *Lectio Divina*, sitting with Marcel is the rendezvous. We're in the rendezvous right now.

Jim Finley: So as you sit with it and internalize it and walk with it, as you end each rendezvous, each time of the *Lectio*, how can I carry forward into the task of the day an underlying habitual sensitivity to this depth dimension? It transcends the task at hand, yet in some ways incarnate in the task at hand. It matters not at the level the ego thinks like how does it turn out? But it matters as an incarnate immediacy, the life that I'm living is to do a certain kind of reverential respect.

Kirsten Oates: And I'm sure you're going to go deeper into this in future sessions, but just hearing you say that has helped me understand that what Marcel is talking about in the I thou relationship doesn't stay in the realm of human to human. It expands out into human to tree, human to dog, human to-

Jim Finley: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

Kirsten Oates: It's the whole cosmos.

Jim Finley: That's right. It's the trans-subjective communion of us. But the us that's realized in the trans-subjective moment is not reducible to us in some way includes everyone. And Jesus would say even it includes our enemies. It includes all of humanity. See, that's why I say that each of us is a unique addition of the universal story of being a human being. And the story of being a human being is the realization of the all-inclusive togetherness in which we're all one with each other in the lives that we're living as human being. And this has opened itself to the mystery of God is giving itself and presencing itself as our presence to each other. This is where Marcel is headed.

Kirsten Oates: And am I right in saying Jim too that would expand out to my relationship with a tree? I can have a relationship with a tree in the realm of the problematic, but I can also see the thou of the tree.

Jim Finley: That's right. Carl Jung says, "How can we claim the years have taught us anything? If we haven't learned to listen to the secret that whispers in the brooks and that's the thou dimension of the sound of water where you look up into the sky at night. See the thou dimension of this, the thou dimension of our own breathing, the passage of time. In some sense, God is the infinity of the concrete immediacy of everything.

Jim Finley: And the concrete immediacy of everything is the concrete immediacy of the presence of God presencing itself as the concrete. And he's trying to stay with this long enough until it starts soaking in and becomes more and more... Because we're longing for it. And when we hear this kind of talk, we sense that it's beautiful and in our heart we know it's beautiful because it's true. And we're trying to be more habitually stabilized. And so by living by it, we might become someone in whose presence others are better able to set. We pass on the contagious energy of this trans-subjective togetherness. It's ultimately to divine really.

Kirsten Oates: So Jim, if I'm hearing you correctly that we can enter a state of consciousness where it's more "I it" and that's more the realm of the problematic. It's the objective or the subjective, the "I it" realm. And then there's the "I thou" realm, which is the realm of mystery and it's the realm that we can't analyze and solve and cling to. And it's the realm that we find in this stance of listening that Marcel describes.

Jim Finley: You're hitting on something I think was also helpful. See the "I it" consciousness is necessary to carry out a task. It's detailed. It requires a certain skill set like producing these talks, getting ready for the talk. It's important. But the point is the underlying intention of doing it is the mystery of it, that is we don't get split off and exiled from the mind. In other words, the non-dual, the trans-subjective oneness, the non-dual is not dualistically other than the dual, it's the infinite ground of the dual itself.

Jim Finley: And therefore it matters that we engage in the task at hand wholeheartedly engaged in it with an underlying understanding that this too is woven in to the mystery. Because I'm doing this for the service of people. I mean I'm doing it... I'm living my life.

Kirsten Oates: And Marcel really thought that the crisis of our age was the loss of that grounding.

Jim Finley: That's right. He did. Martin Heidegger says, "We've fallen out of being that the power of science, the power of the book can be proved and demonstrated." How it's transformed the world from medicine and mental health, everything. But we've been so taken by what technology has achieved. We've lost experiential contact with the interior depth dimensions of presence. So he's trying to say, not to dispel science. We didn't want science. It's part of the gift. But how to ground science itself in this presence.

Kirsten Oates: Jim, before we close today, I thought what might be helpful would be to go through the chapter titles of the first four chapters of Kenneth Gallagher's book, The Philosophy of Gabriel Marcel, because those four chapters seem to really encapsulate Marcel's vision aspects. And then chapter five, he starts to turn towards the path aspects. So let's just go through each chapter one by one. I'll give the name of the chapter and we can talk about the vision aspect that shines through the title.

Jim Finley: Yeah, that's helpful. That's good.

Kirsten Oates: So the first chapter is called The Winding Path, and my understanding is he's talking about life and the way it weaves in and out of these kind of experiences.

Jim Finley: Yes. In other words, the winding path is not just how we wend our way from one circumstance to another. I mean there is that, but the winding path is that as our life moves from one way to another, the winding path brings us to these moments of the depth dimension of thou. And then the winding path also consists as the thou moment passes. The accumulative effect of those thou moments starts stirring with the desire to abide in the depth of moment because we intuit that in these grace thou trans-subjective moments, it isn't something more is given, but a certain parts and the divinity of every moment is laid bare, including this moment. So how can I be healed from an exiles me from this depth dimension of every moment of my life? And that's the winding path.

Kirsten Oates: And you've said many times, Jim, that it's not linear, this path that you're talking about, and so I love the way he articulates it as the winding path. Yeah.

Jim Finley: Another way I'll put it too, this is so true when you look at it too, when I say that sometimes when we're quite young, we're graced with an awakening. We spend the rest of our life learning to be faithful too, that is the developmentally say as a child, for example, if it happens or whenever it happens. You're quickened with an awareness and you're way over your head what you can comprehend. And as you go through your years and develop, you keep trying to grow into something not by falsely, you can explain it, but how as an adult you can freely choose to be ever more faithful, to keep leaning into what was given to you in all subsequent moments that way. So it is nonlinear in that sense.

Kirsten Oates: There's another thing you teach Jim that's I think helpful for the winding path is the way often it's in looking back over our lives. So these podcasts or an invitation for people to reflect back over their lives and realize moments that they may have had to brush over or they weren't able to deepen in.

Jim Finley: That's right. In other words, the way it helps me to see this is that for the people who are listening to this and they're listening to it and they're moved by it or it helps them. So the question is this, for each... Me too, all of us, see how has it come to pass that you've become the man or woman who's even capable of being sensitive to such things at the level you're able to be sensitive to it. And is it not true that it wasn't always this way with you? Sometimes you can open a book like this. What's that mean?

Jim Finley: You open the same book 10 years later and you have to sit down. It gets to you. And so we're always in this intermingling. Because often it's in hindsight then when we look back, we realize that unbeknownst to us at the time, we were already being initiated into this, where we didn't know it. And little by little by little, it's expectant because there's more ahead. I'm on the learning curve at the unforeseeability where it's going to yield to yet deeper realizations. And this will go throughout all of eternity.

Kirsten Oates: I love thinking of everyone listening, and we're all on this winding path, but in this moment we're together, the paths will link up and we can go a little deeper.

Jim Finley: That's exactly right.

Kirsten Oates: The second chapter being in a situation, and it made me think, is he talking about being like uppercase B, God in a situation?

Jim Finley: That's good.

Kirsten Oates: Or is it we're just being in a situation?

Jim Finley: That's very good. Yeah, that's very good. This is what he says in this chapter and this is what he exposes, "See, you're in a situation. I'm in a situation." Right now I'm sitting in my living room in Marina Del Rey speaking like this. And you are in Dorothy where she is, Vanessa, where she is. And each of the listeners later when they're listening, they're in the situation they're in as they listen to this taking a walk or wherever. So we're always in a situation. But the question is this, but if again, becoming aware of the quality of our awareness that ultimately I'm in the situation of being a human being in a world of human beings. That's my situation.

Jim Finley: And you take it even deeper. My situation is that I'm in the presence of God presencing itself in and as who I am in the immediacy of this situation. And so being in a situation is being in the situation that I'm in. I'm here now. Lowercase B, but at the same time that lowercase B is the incarnate manifestation of the higher case B, being in the situation of being. Being the infinity itself is our being here. And that's being in a situation.

Kirsten Oates: I love it.

Jim Finley: Thomas Fortin once says in one of his talks, he says, "Life is 98% Mickey Mouse." And it doesn't help to relocate because if you do, you discover Mickey Mouse waiting for you at the airport to show you to your new apartment. He said, the key to life, and this is Marcel, the key to life is finding the kernel of pure truth that's hidden in your present situation and then living by it.

Kirsten Oates: The next chapter is problem and mystery, and we touched on that quite a lot in this dialogue. And then chapter four, ontological exigence.

Jim Finley: Yes. The word exigence means necessity. Ontological means being. So it's the necessity of being experientially grounded in being, in order to be experientially grounded in the gift and the miracle of being real. Otherwise, I'm reduced to a series of facts. I'm reduced to a series of functions. So that's the necessity. In terms of being in the fullness of life itself, I have to be in this fullness.

Kirsten Oates: And they're really the key themes of the vision for Marcel that we just went through.

Jim Finley: That's right.

Kirsten Oates: And Gallagher has done a great job of pulling out those key themes. And he refers to the books where Marcel has written more extensively on each of those themes when he quotes from Marcel. Is that right, Jim?

Jim Finley: Yeah, I think that's true.



Kirsten Oates: Yeah. Then chapter five is access to being fidelity, hope and love, which you've talked about as now we're getting into the path aspects and that's where you're headed.

Jim Finley: In other words, if this speaks to us at all, if it touches us, it bears witness, we're already on the path of which Marcel speaks. Otherwise, it wouldn't mean anything. So then the question is, yes, I am on this path that I'm touched by it, but what is the way of life that can be ever more deeply, ever more habitually established in this as kind of an underlying sensitivity to the divine depth dimension of the incarnate immediacy of every moment of my life. And what is that path? And that's what he explores.

Jim Finley: Notice, that's just what the mystics do. They help us to become aware of a quickening of our awareness. Then in the quickening, they become aware of the gift of longing to abide there. And then the mystic says, "Well, how do we do that?" And so this is what Marcel is doing. See what is the way of life, this path of the evermore transforming the self-metamorphosing sensitivity to the divinity of the immediacy of everything?

Kirsten Oates: Well, I look forward to hearing more about that in the coming sessions. Thank you for this beautiful start to Marcel, Jim, and it's been a real joy to dialogue with you about it today. Thank you.

Jim Finley: Yeah, I'm grateful we can share it.

Kirsten Oates: And then thank you for Corey, Dorothy, and Vanessa in the background.

Kirsten Oates: Thank you for listening to this episode of Turning to the Mystics, a podcast created by the Center for Action and Contemplation. We're planning to do episodes that answer your questions, so if you have a question, please email us at [podcasts@cac.org](mailto:podcasts@cac.org) or send us a voicemail. All of this information can be found in the show notes. We'll see you again soon.