

# RAMPARTS



MAY · 1962

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# RAMPARTS

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RAMPARTS is a journal published and edited by Catholic laymen that serves as a showcase for the creative writer and as a forum for the mature American Catholic.

RAMPARTS publishes fiction, poetry, art, criticism and essays of distinction, reflecting those positive principles of the Hellenic-Christian tradition which have shaped and sustained our civilization for the past two thousand years, and which are needed still to guide us in an age grown increasingly secular, bewildered, and afraid.

RAMPARTS presents creative works which, besides possessing literary excellence, possess the Christian vision of man, his world, his God.

RAMPARTS seeks out the Christian intellectual and offers him an uninhibited opportunity to explore all the areas of the mind. RAMPARTS demands no special slanting of thought; it demands solely that its authors preserve the intellectual integrity that is their most valued possession, and that they pass this integrity on to their audience.

THE LAYMAN'S PRESS  
Publisher

# THE FINALITY



GABRIEL MARCEL is the dean of French existentialist thinkers, having preceded Sartre and his contemporaries by a good twenty years. He also heralded the return of philosophers to religious themes in his meditations and essays of the World War I years and the 1920's. And he developed his own version of the I-Thou relation, independently of Martin Buber. His major philosophical writings are *Metaphysical Journal*, *Being and Having*, *Homo Viator*, *The Mystery of Being*, and the still untranslated *Du Refus à l'invocation*.

M. Marcel is also the author of over two dozen plays, comprising a unique drama of human conflicts, degradation, and aspiration, to which is added a notable gift for comedy and caricature. Available in English now are *A Man of God*, *Ariadne*, and *The Funeral Pyre in Three Plays* (Hill & Wang), and *The Lantern in Cross Currents*, Spring, 1958. *La Dimension Florestan* (1958) is a broad and uproarious spoof of a philosopher bearing a notorious resemblance to Martin Heidegger, originally entitled *Die Wacht am Sein*.

THE FINALITY OF THE DRAMA originated as a lecture given by M. Marcel at the University of San Francisco, late in 1961.

I AM FULLY AWARE of the ambiguity associated with the term finality in English. It is self-evident that I shall use it here in its strictly philosophical—or theological—meaning. Does a dramatic work have a finality? And if so, what is its nature? We shall have to see why the question in this context presents any significance or special relevance to contemporary theater. I shall approach the question as it applies to myself both as a playwright and as a drama critic. And clearly also, I shall never lose sight of what can be called the philosophical horizon of the problem.

Let us notice, to begin with, that this question can be answered and solved by the near invalidation of itself. This answer would consist in saying that the theater exists only to entertain, to fill time, or even, if you wish, as a way of killing time. It is all too obvious that a great number of plays actually do nothing else, and it is also true that a large number of theatergoers ask only that a play provide them with this kind of diversion. I have even gone so far as to say that the plays which we call in Paris *pièces de boulevard* can be treated as branches of gastronomy, the predominant characteristic of such plays being that they digest easily and that they even speed along the digestion of the dinner which preceded them.

But to ask oneself whether or not the art of the drama has a finality is precisely to ask oneself whether or not it reduces itself to being anything else than a diversion of this kind, and one can honestly say that the whole history of the drama before compels us to reply negatively.

Yet immediately a question comes up which requires us to use precise terms: philosophers and, in particular, Kant, have instituted a fundamental distinction between an internal finality and an external finality. There is external finality each time one finds oneself in the presence of an object that has been conceived and manufactured so as to fulfill some definite purpose. An instrument or a utensil of any sort whatever are instances of this. On the contrary, it is generally acknowledged that a living organism bears an internal finality which stems from the fact that the links which unite the organs and the functions are subordi-