Jacques Maritain: A Neo-Thomist Classic

Gerald A. McCool, S. J. / *Fordham University*

Although in many respects the postconciliar development of Catholic thought has passed by Jacques Maritain, the questions which he raised in epistemology and metaphysics retain their relevance for the Catholic theologian. His epistemology and metaphysics still have a word to say, for example, in the current discussion over the scientific method of Catholic theology, and it would be imprudent to ignore the pertinence of his philosophy of knowledge and being to the current debate about the relation of Catholic theology to philosophy and the empirical sciences. With the exception of Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar, no Catholic systematic theologian in this century has been able to present a program for the intellectual unification of Christian experience which can match Maritain's speculative synthesis in its range, depth, consistency, and sophistication.

While Rahner and von Balthasar have been guided in their speculative unification of Christian experience by the ascetic and mystical world view of St. Ignatius Loyola, the religious source of unity in Maritain's Christian humanism was his deeply lived commitment to the spiritual theology of the Order of Preachers. Both Jesuit and Dominican spirituality are respected by the Catholic church as vital and orthodox religious traditions. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the two spiritualities, and these differences have given a distinctive stamp to the theology, the philosophy, and the humanism of the two religious orders. Furthermore, Hans Urs von Balthasar's theological inspiration comes from the church fathers, and his theology of culture is characterized by a pronounced distrust of Neo-Thomist philosophy as a speculative unifier of Christian experience.[1] Karl Rahner is a transcen-

[1] See Henry de Lubac, S.J., "A Witness to Christ in the Church: Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* 2 (1975): 228–49. The Fall 1975 issue of *Communio* is devoted to Hans Urs von Balthasar.

© 1978 by The University of Chicago. 0022-4189/78/5804-0004$02.00

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

dental Thomist theologian in the Jesuit tradition of Joseph Maréchal. Jacques Maritain, on the other hand, although a layman of independent mind, was a convinced Thomist in the Dominican tradition of John of St. Thomas. Unlike Rahner and von Balthasar, he deliberately restricted his work as a Christian thinker to the role of the Christian philosopher.

MARITAIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC THOUGHT

Maritain's philosophical career began in the early years of the twentieth century and continued until his death in 1973. He was a major force in Catholic thought for over half a century. The bibliography of his books and articles is enormous. Yet he was not simply a writer. Among other things, he was an editor and a lecturer who was as well known in North and South America as he was in France. His influence on Catholic social thought and education theory was as significant as his influence on Catholic speculative philosophy and theology. It was no accident that Paul VI, who as Giovanni Battista Montini had translated Maritain's *Three Reformers* into Italian and called himself a "disciple of Maritain," designated him, after he had already served as French ambassador to the Holy See, to represent Catholic lay intellectuals at the solemn closing of the Second Vatican Council.[2]

In the course of his long career, Maritain was influenced by the great intellectual movements in twentieth-century Catholic life. He began his work before the First World War when Neo-Thomism was beginning to define itself, and its representatives felt the tension between their attraction toward Bergsonian philosophy and their fear of modernism, to say nothing of the religiopolitical tensions in prewar French Catholicism. He acquired his worldwide reputation between the wars. In those two decades a new generation of classical and Maréchalian Thomists laid the speculative foundations of their opposing systems and entered into fruitful dialogue with contemporary culture. It was a remarkably productive period for Catholic social theory. Under the forceful leadership of Pius XI, the church ceased to identify itself with authoritarian politics and began its historic turn to parliamentary democracy.

Maritain's classical Thomism was vigorously challenged in the postwar debate over philosophical and theological pluralism.[3] Although the debate was cut short by Pius XII's encyclical, *Humani Generis*, it was resumed during the Second Vatican Council. Maritain's influence was felt during the preparation for the council and during its deliberations.

[2] Julie Kernan, *Our Friend, Jacques Maritain* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1975), pp. 172–75.

[3] See Robert F. Harvanek, S.J., "The Unity of Metaphysics," *Thought* 28 (1953): 375–412.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

His negative reaction was expressed in the three significant works which he published after its conclusion, especially in his controversial *The Peasant of the Garonne*.

Thus Maritain lived through the growth and flowering of classical Neo-Thomism in the first half of the twentieth century to witness its decline after the Second Vatican Council. In the realm of speculative philosophy, he is without challenge the movement's greatest representative. We need only recall a few of the titles which are still familiar to philosophers and theologians in their fifties to appreciate the extent of his intellectual contribution to Catholic thought. In addition to *The Degrees of Knowledge*, *Science and Wisdom*, and *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle*, several other expositions of his epistemology and metaphysics attracted widespread attention. Among them were *Introduction to Logic*, *A Preface to Metaphysics*, *Introduction to Philosophy*, *Philosophy of Nature*, *The Range of Reason*, and *Existence and the Existent*. His critique of post-Reformation philosophy and theology received lively expression in *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism*, *Three Reformers*, and *The Dream of Descartes*. His most widely read works, however, were his reflections on aesthetics, politics, culture, and education. *Art and Scholasticism* and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* have retained their popularity. *The Things That Are Not Caesar's, Freedom in the Modern World*, *Man and the State*, and *The Person and the Common Good* were frequently cited titles not so many years ago. A new English edition of *Integral Humanism* was brought out by the University of Notre Dame Press in 1973.

Younger readers, who are less familiar with Maritain, can find a number of excellent introductions to his thought. Henry Bars's *Maritain en notre temps* and *La Politique selon Jacques Maritain*[4] are well worth reading. The recognized American authority on Maritain, Joseph W. Evans, longtime director of the Jacques Maritain Center at Notre Dame, edited a first-rate set of essays, *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Achievement*.[5] *Thomist* devoted a special issue to Maritain in 1943. *Revue Thomiste* followed suit in 1948 with an issue which makes particularly rewarding reading. In 1972, *New Scholasticism* published a series of articles on Maritain in its winter issue. *Etudes philosophiques* printed another series in its January 1975 issue. Both are extremely useful for an overall appreciation of Maritain and an insight into his last three works. At least four collections of selected texts have been published in

[4] Henry Bars, *Maritain en notre temps* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 1959), and *La Politique selon Jacques Maritain* (Paris: Editions Ouvrières, 1961).

[5] Joseph W. Evans, ed., *Jacques Maritain: The Man and His Achievement* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963).

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

English.[6] A number of extensive bibliographies are also available.[7]

The abundance of existing literature about Maritain raises the question as to whether another article on his work is really needed. There are reasons, however, to recommend a reconsideration of his work at the present time. In the rapid evolution of Catholic thought since Vatican II he has dropped from sight. Catholic philosophy and theology have entered a new intellectual world. They have ceased to view reality from the standpoint of classical Thomism. Maritain can easily be ignored today when he should be reconsidered. He is one of contemporary Catholic theology's immediate ancestors. He links present-day Catholic thought with its recent past, and he still presents Catholic thought with a set of questions which demand an answer. Even though it must lack the completeness and precision which an adequate account of Maritain's thought should have, a reflection on his Christian philosophy from the standpoint of contemporary Catholic thought can serve a useful purpose. At the very least, it may stimulate contemporary philosophers and theologians to return to the text of an author who still has a lot to say to them.

THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER

Maritain's understanding of his function as a Christian philosopher in the community of Christian thinkers was determined by his epistemology and metaphysics. From the beginning of his career as a Christian philosopher he devoted his remarkable speculative ability to the clarification and development of the philosophy which he had inherited from St. Thomas's Dominican commentators. John of St. Thomas, the great seventeenth-century commentator, was his principal guide in his interpretation of St. Thomas's text. To a great extent, the epistemology and metaphysics of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas became his own. He drew upon them constantly to work out his own solutions to contemporary problems concerning the relation of philosophy to theology, science, ethics, aesthetics, and politics. In his books and articles the Thomism of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas manifested an unexpected ability to

[6] Joseph W. Evans and Leo Ward, eds., *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), and *Challenges and Renewals* (New York: Meridian Books, 1968); Donald and Idella Gallagher, *The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966), and *A Maritain Reader* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1966).

[7] See Joseph W. Evans, "A Maritain Bibliography," *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 118–28. See also Donald and Idella Gallagher, *The Achievement of Jacques and Raïssa Maritain: A Bibliography 1906–1961* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1961). Extensive bibliographies can also be found in the Maritain issues of *Thomist* and *Revue Thomiste* and in Bars's *Maritain en notre temps.*

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

unify contemporary Christian experience and, by doing so, established its credentials as a serious contemporary philosophy of culture.

Maritain's defense of an autonomous Christian philosophy was a contemporary restatement of the relation of scientific theology to speculative and practical philosophy proposed in the great Dominican commentator's division of the sciences. One of the presuppositions of St. Thomas's division of the sciences, Maritain explained in *The Degrees of Knowledge,* was the Aristotelian division of the intellect into its speculative and practical functions. Another was the distinction of three specifically diverse levels of scientific intelligibility within the speculative intellect. Each level was attained through a specifically diverse act of formal abstraction or scientific conceptualization.[8] A third presupposition was the elevation of the human intellect to its supernatural end through the habit of sanctifying grace.[9]

On the basis of the Thomistic division of the sciences and its presuppositions, Maritian argued, as John of St. Thomas had argued before him, that Christian experience could not be unified on the speculative level without the specific contribution of an autonomous Christian philosophy.[10] A speculative unification of Christian experience—of the type which Rahner and von Balthasar advocate today, effected by a speculative theology which has declared its independence of any determined system of philosophy—could not be reconciled with St. Thomas's philosophical theology or with his division of the sciences. For in St. Thomas's account of human knowledge the philosophical and theological disciplines were specifically distinct and irreducibly diverse intellectual habits. Each discipline must perform its own distinct and proper function in the speculative unification of human knowledge. The irreducible distinction between their operations was demanded by the metaphysical structure of the elevated human mind. Consequently, neither the evolution of the culture nor the historical development of theology could eliminate the necessity for a distinct and autonomous Christian philosophy. Faith and grace changed the state of the philosophical habit in the believer's mind. The believer's concrete experience, which his philosophy was called upon to integrate, was Christian experience. The elevated Christian mind which philosophized in the historical order was a believing mind, purified and illuminated by habitual grace and the infused virtues of faith, hope, and charity.

[8] Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 35–36, 310–19. This is the second English translation of *Les Degrès du savoir*. Unless otherwise specified, all subsequent works cited are by Maritain.

[9] Ibid., pp. 254–57.

[10] See *An Essay on Christian Philosophy* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955).

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Change in its state, however, could not effect the destruction of an intellectual habit whose functioning presence was demanded by the very nature of the elevated human mind. Philosophy could never become theology. The Christian theologian could not "philosophize within theology," as Karl Rahner invites him to do today,[11] without violating the essential order and blurring the necessary distinction of the sciences.

MARITAIN AND JOHN OF ST. THOMAS

Although Maritain was a Thomist in the Dominican tradition, he was not a traditionalist either by temperament or cultural heritage. He was a convert from liberal agnosticism who had found the meaning of life in the Catholic faith after seeking it first in science, art, and philosophy. Thomism was not the philosophy in which he had been educated. It was a happy discovery which revealed the possibility of a Christian philosophy after the conflict between faith and philosophy had led him to despair of his own future as a philosopher.[12] The philosophy of St. Thomas, to which his spiritual director, Humbert Clérissac, O.P., introduced him, won his adherence through its ability to unify and illuminate his own personal experience. It also enabled him to resolve two of the major tensions in his intellectual life which he shared with many of the leading Catholic thinkers of his generation. Thomism showed him how the world view of modern science and culture could be reconciled with the world view of his Catholic faith.[13] Its philosophy of knowledge permitted him to reconcile the intuitive awareness of the concrete subject, which Bergson had restored to its rightful place in philosophy, with the Aristotelian philosophy of abstract concepts and stable natures which Catholic theologians, reacting against the threat of modernism, considered the church's indispensable protection against dogmatic relativism.

Bergsonian philosophy captivated Maritain, as it attracted Rousselot and Maréchal. But the Thomism which Humbert Clérissac advocated as an antidote to Bergsonian relativism was not the subject-oriented Thomism which Rousselot and Maréchal exploited. On the contrary, it was John of St. Thomas's epistemology and metaphysics of the intentional sign and the three degrees of abstraction. In John of St. Thomas's philosophy of knowledge, contact with being, the starting point of

[11] Karl Rahner, S.J., "Philosophy and Theology," *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969), pp. 43–58.
[12] Kernan (n. 2 above), pp. 28– 40.
[13] Ibid., pp. 40–42.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

metaphysics, was effected through the intentional content of the abstracted concept—the extramental object's intentional "sign." The mind's primordial grasp of being did not take place in the knowing subject's reflection upon the dynamic activity of his own abstracting and judging intellect as the Maréchalian Thomists claim. Being was not reached through the knowing process of the subject but through the known object, the first term of the act of knowledge.

Maritain's choice of John of St. Thomas as his guide to the interpretation of the Angelic Doctor was a momentous one. The radical difference between their approaches to being meant that Maritain's epistemology and metaphysics would be irreducibly opposed to the transcendental metaphysics of Maréchal, Le Blond, and de Lubac. This opposition manifested its theological consequences in the momentous debate over theological pluralism terminated by Pius XII's *Humani Generis* in 1950. Maréchalian Thomism's approach to being through the activity of the abstracting and judging intellect allowed for a plurality of conceptual frameworks and a consequent plurality of metaphysics and theologies. John of St. Thomas's approach to being through the abstracted concept did not. Therefore, for John of St. Thomas's disciples there could be only one set of fundamental metaphysical concepts. Consequently, there could be only one true system of metaphysics and one true system of speculative theology.[14]

The diversity in their philosophies of knowledge also meant that the relationship between philosophy, science, and theology proposed in Maritain's *The Degrees of Knowledge* and *Science and Wisdom* would be radically different from the relationship proposed in the transcendental Thomism of Rahner and Lonergan. Maritain's brilliant exploitation of John of St. Thomas's metaphysics of the Thomistic epistemology of the sign made *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* a masterpiece of Thomistic aesthetics.[15] On the other hand, the metaphysics of abstraction which was linked to the epistemology of the sign in John of St. Thomas's philosophy prevented Maritain from doing justice to the historical character of contemporary science and culture in his speculative philosophy, even though, as *Integral Humanism* shows, Maritain was very much aware of its significance for contemporary Christian humanism.[16] Because of this deficiency in his speculative thought, postconciliar

[14] Harvanek (n. 3 above).

[15] *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1953). For Maritain's philosophy of the sign see his *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1939), pp. 63–127.

[16] For a recent and sympathetic discussion of Maritain's philosophy of history, see Brooke W. Smith, *Jacques Maritain: Anti-Modern or Ultra-Modern?* (New York: Elsevier, 1976), pp. 1–47, 74–90.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Catholic theology, characterized by an enthusiastic receptiveness toward history and pluralism, has ceased to turn to Maritain for inspiration. The relative neglect into which his work has fallen as a consequence should not be taken as sign that Maritain has no longer anything to say to his successors. Paradoxically, although Maritain was among the most traditional of the classical Thomistic philosophers in his epistemology and metaphysics, he was the most open minded and modern in his understanding and appreciation of contemporary culture. He was also the most original and personal in his speculative writing. His openness to contemporary culture and his experiential grasp of its uniqueness enabled him to pose the questions which a Christian philosopher of the culture must ask today. And, in his answers to them, Maritain set a standard of honesty, inclusiveness, depth, rigor, and coherence which can serve as a guide and challenge to younger Catholic thinkers in their own work.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONVERSION

The child of a nonpracticing Catholic father and a liberal Protestant mother, Maritain grew up without personal religious faith. In his late teens the problem of life's meaning forced itself upon him in an acute and agonizing way. A solid grounding in the empirical sciences and in turn-of-the-century university philosophy failed to provide an answer to this tormenting problem. During his scientific studies at the Sorbonne, Maritain met the young Jewish girl, Raïssa Oumansoff, who soon became his wife. Until her death in 1960 Raïssa was to be his co-worker and his closest confidante. Raïssa too was tormented by the riddle of life's meaning. Like Jacques, she had been disillusioned by the failure of science and philosophy to solve it. Their continuing inability to discover a meaning in their lives tempted the engaged couple to thoughts of suicide.[17]

They were rescued from their despair when their friend, Charles Péguy, invited them to come with him to Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France. Bergson's metaphysics disclosed a new world of freedom, process, and creative evolution in which life was no longer meaningless. Maritain never forgot his debt to Henri Bergson. Many of his own significant contributions to philosophy—his philosophy of the person and his epistemology of the eidetic intuition, for example—can be attributed to Bergson's stimulating influence on his own thought. Far from being a rejection of Bergsonian philosophy, Maritain would later

[17] Kernan, pp. 15–25.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

claim, his own Thomism clarified, refined, and released some of Bergson's most valuable "intentions" from the distortions which Bergson's deficient conceptualization imposed upon them.[18]

Shortly after their marriage, the influence of Léon Bloy brought Jacques and Raïssa Maritain into the Catholic church. Contrary to their expectations, life's ultimate meaning manifested itself on the religious rather than on the philosophical level. His religious conversion, however, imposed painful personal sacrifices upon the young Bergsonian philosopher. To insure his intellectual independence as a convinced Catholic in the anticlerical French republic, Maritain abandoned his plans for a university career. When he could not reconcile his own Bergsonian philosophy with the rigid requirements of Catholic orthodoxy at the height of the modernist crisis, he made up his mind to abandon philosophy as a career.

THE TEACHING CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER

The absoluteness of these decisions exemplifies the uncompromising devotion to principle which Maritain exhibited during his entire career. He never balked at paying the price of his convictions. Considerations of security and popularity never entered into his decisions. On the other hand, he always considered that the official teaching of the church was a matter of supreme importance. In the historical order the church possessed the truth on the religious level. Faith was a surer guide than philosophy. If he could not support the church's condemnation of modernism as a practicing philosopher, he would turn his back on philosophy as his life's work. Many years later when Pius XI condemned the reactionary Action Française in 1926, Maritain deliberately risked his standing in the Catholic intellectual community by his courageous defense of the papal measure which conservative Catholics resented and resisted.[19] Two ecclesial condemnations of suspect doctrines had a profound influence on Maritain's philosophical evolution. The condemnation of modernism led to his break with Bergson's processive intuitionism. The condemnation of the Action Française directed his attention to political philosophy and made him the most effective philosophical defender of political democracy in the Neo-Thomist movement. Maritain's attack on the Action Française in *The Things That Are Not Caesar's* made it the first of the series of books which won him an international reputation as a political philosopher.

[18] See *Bergsonian Philosophy and Thomism* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 5–60.
[19] Kernan, pp. 70–84.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Although its ultimate explanation lies on the religious level, Maritain's acceptance of the church's magistral direction was consistent with his own understanding of Christian philosophy. In its Christian state, the intellectual habit of philosophy must be enlightened and strengthened by the supernatural habit of faith. For it was through the habit of faith that the light of divine revelation was received in the concrete believing mind. Christian philosophy was autonomous, but it was not, and could never be, a separated Cartesian philosophy.

EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE SIGN AND THE THEMATIZATION OF EXPERIENCE

At the time when his spiritual director, Humbert Clérissac, O.P., introduced him to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas, Maritain had already acquired his remarkable grip upon contemporary culture. A trained biologist and a talented speculative philosopher, he possessed considerable literary talent.[20] He had already manifested the ability, which he kept all his life, to win and retain the friendship of musicians, artists, and men of letters. His wife, Raïssa, was a talented poet. She and Jacques both led lives of interior prayer. Both had learned to reflect upon their inner experience of God with the help of their Dominican spiritual director. Science, art, music, literature, and prayer were concrete lived realities for Maritain. So was the experience of a reflective interior life of prayer and purification, fostered and integrated by one of the great spiritual traditions of the Catholic church. A proper appreciation of his Christian philosophy cannot be had without some understanding of the dynamic tension running through it between Maritain's rich interior experience and its reflexive thematization in his Thomistic epistemology and metaphysics.

In John of St. Thomas's *Logic*, Maritain had discovered the metaphysics of the concept as a cognitional sign.[21] Combined with the Thomistic metaphysics of the self-conscious subject, John of St. Thomas's metaphysics of the sign provided a link, which Maritain exploited brilliantly, betwen Bergson's philosophy of intuition and the Thomistic metaphysics of knowledge, man, and being. In St. Thomas's philosophy of human knowledge, the knowing subject came to self-conscious self-awareness through the judicial affirmation, in which an object, represented in a universal idea, was predicated of a sensible singular. Maritain argued that the human knower's objective affirmation was an affirmation of being because the stability of the objective content,

[20] Following his conversion, Maritain spent two years in biological research under Hans Driesch at Heidelberg.

[21] See *Quatre essais*, pp. 64–89.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

represented in the universal idea, depended upon the principle of identity: "What is, is." Thus the concept was a cognitional sign. In other words, it was a medium in and through which (*medium quo*) the ontological reality of the extramental object became intentionally present in the knower. Thus the object of the knower's judicial affirmation was not confined, as the idealists believed, to the intramental realm of consciousness. Furthermore, once the affirming subject thematized his concomitant awareness of his own existence through a subsequent reflexive judgment, he became aware that his own reality, as a knowing subject, must also be included in the realm of being. In Maritain's critical realism, consciousness manifested itself as being through the objective judgment. Being was not consciousness, as Husserl claimed in his phenomenology.[22]

The Thomistic epistemology of concomitant consciousness, which post-Cartesian philosophy had overlooked, vindicated the affirming subject's certitude of his own reality as a moving, acting, and knowing being. Thomistic concomitant consciousness, however, was not the Bergsonian primordial intuition of being as duration. It was in the subsequent judgment of reflex consciousness that the self-conscious knower affirmed himself as being. Being was not affirmed on the basis of a prior grasp of motion or duration because being was the ground of the all-embracing principle of identity whose transcendental intelligibility was not restricted to finite motion. Thus motion could only be affirmed through the mind's prior grasp of being in the judgment's universal concept. Nevertheless, this grasp of being, on which every judgment depended for its stability, could be called an intuition. For extramental being was immediately present to the human knower through the concept which was its cognitional sign. The intuition of being, however, was an eidetic intuition. For being was grasped through the *eidos* represented in its abstracted concept.[23]

Thus critical realism as an epistemology depended upon the metaphysics of the concept as a cognitional sign. In St. Thomas's metaphysics of sensitive-intellectual knowledge, moreover, there were

[22] For Maritain's critical realism, see *The Degrees of Knowledge*, pp. 71–135. For Maritain's critique of Husserl, see ibid., pp. 101–7. For an excellent analysis of Maritain's epistemology, see Georges van Riet, *L'Epistémologie Thomiste* (Louvain: Institut Supérieur de Philosophie, 1946), pp. 349–75.

[23] *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), pp. 1–46. As Maritain explained in *Existence and the Existent*, the abstraction of the concept of being depended upon the knower's simultaneous judicial act. For the influence of the judgment on the abstraction of being, see Olivier Lacombe, "Jacques Maritain Metaphysician," *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 18–31. For Maritain's use of intuition in his philosophy, see the remarkable study of Laura Fraga de Almeida Sampaio, C.R., *L'Intuition dans la philosophie de Jacques Maritain* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1963).

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

many other cognitional signs in addition to the concept. Each of these signs made extramental reality present to the human knower in a specifically different way. Through concomitant consciousness, the human knower became aware of his own reality and of the extramental world intrinsically identified with it through the diverse multitude of cognitional signs.

Maritain carefully distinguished between the human knower's concomitant self-awareness and the diverse types of objective knowledge acquired through these cognitional signs. Then he applied his philosophy of knowledge to the religious, aesthetic, moral, and scientific realms of experience. Acts of sense knowledge, including the phantasm of the imagination, were a special type of cognitional sign. Affective acts and habits, whether of natural love or supernatural charity, were cognitional signs of a specifically different sort. In every cognitional sign an extramental object was intentionally identified with the knowing subject. The concept alone, however, permitted the subject to distinguish clearly between his own reality and the reality of the extramental object in the affirmation of the judgment. Acts of sensation and affective acts and habits, even when the latter were spiritual, did not. Sensation and affectivity could not transcend the level of experience on which subject and object were not clearly distinguished. Only the concept permitted the knower to reach the level of scientific awareness through his objective judgments in which knowing subject and known object were clearly distinguished from each other.[24]

Maritain exploited the distinction between experiential and scientific knowledge brilliantly in his speculative integration of human knowledge. It enabled him to reconcile St. John of the Cross's mystical theology with the scientific theology of the Angelic Doctor in *The Degrees of Knowledge*.[25] The Christian mystic enjoyed an experiential knowledge of the Triune God, intentionally united to his soul on the affective level, through the supernatural habit of charity. Experiential knowledge of God through the cognitional sign of charity did not clearly distinguish between the reality of God and the reality of the human knower. The theologian made this distinction clearly in his scientific knowledge of the revealing God. It was not surprising, therefore, that the language in which John of the Cross described his experiential knowledge of God differed markedly from the language of St. Thomas's scientific theology. The form of these two types of knowledge differed, even though the God who was their extramental term was the same. Maritain also employed the

[24] *Existence and the Existent*, pp. 65–74.
[25] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, pp. 310–51.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

distinction between experiential and scientific knowledge in his defense of natural mysticism in *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle*.[26] The Indian ascetic, who has purified his mind of its images and concepts through the discipline of yoga, can acquire experiential knowledge of his own act of existence in the experience of the void. This experience can become an encounter with the Absolute on the level of nature. For it is a grasp of the mystic's substantial act of existence in which the Absolute is present through his conserving activity. On the experiential level, the mystic and the Absolute cannot be clearly distinguished. Therefore the experience of union is mystical. Nevertheless, the experience is natural because the cognitional sign through which the Absolute becomes intentionally present is not the supernatural habit of charity but the mystic's grasp of his own substantial act of existence.

Maritain used the distinction again to discriminate between existential and metaphysical knowledge of the self in *Existence and the Existent*.[27] He used it with great success to distinguish betwen experiential knowledge of reality, through the cognitional sign of the intellectualized phantasm, and scientific conceptual knowledge in *Art and Scholasticism* and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*.[28] The soul's mystical experience of itself and God was not the conceptual knowledge of scientific theology. Aesthetic experience was not philosophy. The intrinsic aims of these diverse forms of knowledge were not, and could not be, the same. To make mysticism a substitute for theology or to make art a substitute for scientific self-knowledge—as the symbolists appeared to do—was a fatally destructive error.[29]

FINALITY AND ANALOGY

Maritain's philosophy of knowledge drew upon a number of distinctive elements of Thomistic epistemology and metaphysics. Among these were St. Thomas's epistemology of concomitant consciousness, the dynamic cooperation of sense and intellect in man's abstractive knowledge, and the metaphysical composition between essence and existence in the concrete singular. Two other important elements in John of St. Thomas's philosophy of the cognitional sign were the metaphysics of natural finality and the metaphysics of analogy, which Descartes had abandoned at the beginning of modern philosophy. The Cartesian

[26] *Quatre essais*, pp. 131–77.

[27] *Existence and the Existent*, pp. 62–86. See also Henry Bars's masterly article, "Sujet et subjectivité selon Jacques Maritain," *Etudes philosophiques* (1975), pp. 31–46.

[28] *Art and Scholasticism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962), pp. 5–22; *Creative Intuition*, pp. 75–108.

[29] *Creative Intuition*, pp. 179–84.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

knowing subject was a substantial mind, indirectly aware of the qualityless, mechanistic world of Cartesian physics through its innate ideas. St. Thomas's knowing subject, on the contrary, was an Aristotelian nature. The dynamic finality of man's unitary human nature accounted for the cooperation of sense and intellect in his abstractive act of knowledge. As an incarnate Aristotelian nature, St. Thomas's human knower was endowed with an active intellect, through whose goal-directed activity the universal concept was abstracted from the concrete phantasm of the imagination. Furthermore, as an Aristotelian nature, the incarnate human subject was moved to action by the unitary drive of human knowledge and human desire toward their common goal, the harmonious development of his natural potencies. Intellectual knowledge was not divorced from physical nature in St. Thomas's metaphysics as it was in Cartesian philosophy. The realistic abstractive knowledge, whose validity Maritain had vindicated in his critical realism, was an activity of man's unified Aristotelian nature. The combined activity of the known object and the knowing subject in the process of knowledge accounted for the presence of extramental reality in the cognitional sign. Action's finality was the bond between knowledge and nature. Once Descartes had abandoned activity and finality in his mechanistic physics, the bond between knowledge and nature was severed.[30]

The cooperation of sense and intellect, knowledge and appetitive finality, in man's cognitive activity made his experience a dynamic unity composed of several specifically distinctive forms of sensible and intellectual knowledge. The causal influence of man's active intellect transformed his imagination into an intellectualized sense. The imagination's cognitive content could then be transformed by the intellect either into the abstract concept of scientific knowledge or the concrete symbol of aesthetic or religious experience. Since the dynamic process of human knowledge was intrinsically subordinated to the unitary finality of human nature, the knowing subject was a knower and a doer. He was not a passive speculative mind. Man's intellectual knowledge was not confined to the abstract concepts of the speculative sciences. Human knowledge also directed the constructive work of *homo faber* and the concrete choices of the moral agent. Therefore, the human intellect was distinguished functionally into the speculative intellect, whose norm of truth was the conformity of its abstracted concepts to their extramental objects, and the practical intellect. The latter directed man's constructive and moral activity by its exemplary ideas. Its norm of truth was the

[30] For Maritain's critique of Descartes, see his *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929). See also *The Dream of Descartes and Other Essays* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944).

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

conformity of man's making and doing to their concrete ends.

To form the concepts of its scientific knowledge, man's abstractive intellect prescinded from concrete matter the principle of space, time, and singularity. This was the first degree of formal abstraction which allowed the speculative intellect to focus its attention on the universal intelligibility of physical motion. Through the first degree of abstraction the mind had access to the intentional realm of a philosophy of nature. The intelligibility of physical motion, however, presupposed the intelligibility of bodily extension. But the intelligibility of bodily extension did not presuppose the intelligibility of motion. Once the mind had grasped this truth, it could prescind from the intelligibility of motion to focus its attention on the intelligibility of extension alone. The mind had then ascended to the second degree of formal abstraction. It had entered the specifically distinct intelligible realm constituted by figure, number, and quantitative relations. This was the intentional realm of mathematics. Transcendental notions, like being, unity, truth, goodness, substance, act, potency, relation, did not presuppose bodily extension for their own intrinsic intelligibility. Once the mind had grasped this truth, it had ascended to the third degree of abstraction. Prescinding from the intelligibility of motion and quantity, it fixed its gaze on the intelligibility of being itself and entered the intentional realm of metaphysics.[31]

Since their defining concepts were drawn from the phantasm of the imagination by three specifically distinct processes of formal abstraction, philosophy of nature, mathematics, and metaphysics operated scientifically on three irreducibly distinct levels of intelligibility. Each of these sciences moved from its principles to its conclusions through specifically distinct conceptual frameworks. The three branches of speculative philosophy could not be subsumed under a common generic notion of science. Aesthetics and moral philosophy were equally distinct from one another. Aesthetics directed the "making" of the fine arts. Moral philosophy directed the "acting" of the moral agent. They were practical sciences, habits of the practical intellect. The empirical sciences, which were not part of philosophy of nature, were concerned with the organization of phenomena on the physicomathematical order. They made no claim to provide an ontological explanation of reality, and their deliverances had to be integrated into the speculative organization of human knowledge through the mediation of a philosophy of nature.[32]

Therefore science was an analogous notion. It could not be applied to the speculative, practical, and empirical sciences in the univocal Carte-

[31] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, pp. 35–38.
[32] Ibid., pp. 38 ff.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

sian manner. There was no unitary method which could be made a univocal model for all the sciences in the way in which Descartes had applied his model of mathematical physics to all systematic intellectual activity. Cartesian mathematicism could unify the sciences only by depriving them of their distinctive scientific methods. St. Thomas's metaphysics, on the contrary, which possessed the metaphysics of knowledge and analogy which post-Cartesian philosophy had lost, could integrate the sciences and still permit each one of them to retain its proper autonomy and its own distinctive method.

Analogy and finality also permitted Thomistic metaphysics to do justice to the specific character of mystical and aesthetic knowledge. Supernatural mysticism was the knower's experiential response to the divine reality intentionally united with him through the cognitional sign of supernatural charity. Natural mysticism was the human knower's experiential grasp of his own act of existence in the experience of the void. Aesthetic knowledge was the artist's symbolic expression of his cognitional and affective response to the sensible beauty intentionally identified with his own reality in the intellectualized phantasm. Mystical and aesthetic knowledge, like moral knowledge, were acts and habits of the practical intellect. Since their goal was not speculative knowledge, their norm of truth was not the conformity between abstracted ideas and extramental reality. It was rather the conformity between man's directive knowledge and the concrete goal of man's making or doing. Fine art, moreover, was a "making" of a very special kind. Its goal was the symbolic expression of the sensible reality cognitively identified with the artist in the obscure sign of his creative intuition. Artistic creation entailed both self-awareness and self-expression in the artist's making of his expressive symbol.[33]

The symbols through which artists expressed their personal experience of sensible beauty in each of the fine arts—music, poetry, and the plastic arts, for example—were specifically diverse. Therefore, creative production in each of the fine arts had its own specific goal. Each art was different in its nature, and each had its own specific aesthetic rules. These differences must be carefully noted and respected. When creative artists lost sight of the specific aim of their artistic creation and confused the goal of their symbolic self-expression with the speculative goal of science, philosophy, or theology, the effect upon their art—and upon their lives as artists—could be disastrous.[34] Maritain's philosophy of art,

[33] Ibid., pp. 247–90, 310–26; *Creative Intuition,* pp. 31–38.
[34] Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *The Situation of Poetry* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), pp. 50–64.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the theme of *Art and Scholasticism*, *The Situation of Poetry*, *Frontiers of Poetry*, and *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*, is without doubt one of his most valuable contributions to contemporary thought. His wide knowledge and deep love of poetry, art, and music are evident in the rich documentation which he uses to support his theoretical conclusions in these books.

ARISTOTELIAN METAPHYSICS VERSUS INTENTIONALITY ANALYSIS

Maritain's exposition of the distinction between the human subject's self-awareness and his knowledge of the world and his ability to discriminate distinct cognitional signs reminds his reader of phenomenology. One reason for the similarity between Maritain's philosophy of knowledge and twentieth-century phenomenology is that both Maritain and Husserl exploited St. Thomas's notion of intentionality. Their use of intentionality enabled both Maritain and philosophers in the phenomenological tradition to overcome the narrowness of positivistic scientism and to thematize the distinct intelligible "regions" of aesthetic, moral, social, and scientific knowledge. Nevertheless, his critical realism made him implacably hostile to the phenomenological approach to intentionality.

Until the end of his career, Maritain maintained his opposition to every philosophical movement, including Maréchalian Thomism, whose *point d'appui* was the subject's self-awareness rather than the eidetic intuition of being.[35] The eidetic intuition of being, grasped in its abstract concept, was the only gateway to metaphysical reality. Only the critical realist possessed this key. No philosopher in the Cartesian or Kantian tradition could ever possess it. For, once a philosopher suspended his immediate assent to extramental reality through the objective judgment—even as a methodological hypothesis in the manner of the Maréchalian Thomists—he could never make his way out of idealism.[36] Furthermore, the eidetic intuition of being and the realistic epistemology of the three degrees of abstraction were required to ground the analogy of being and the specific distinction between the sciences. This distinction, which was required to justify each science's specific method, was grounded upon the diverse objects which were the terms of human knowledge. In all of them the knowing subject remained the same.[37]

Therefore the Cartesian subjective starting point, which Husserl and

[35] See Maritain's critique of contemporary phenomenology in *The Peasant of the Garonne* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), pp. 107–11.

[36] *The Degrees of Knowledge*, pp. 104–11.

[37] Ibid., pp. 39–50, 119–32.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the Maréchalians had taken over, led inevitably to idealism and to the imposition of a univocal method upon all systematic thought. It was not surprising that post-Cartesian philosophy could not unify the sciences without doing violence to their distinctive methods. Descartes tried to impose the method of mathematics on all the speculative sciences. Kant confined the speculative intellect to the realm of eighteenth-century mathematical physics. Descartes identified physicomathematical science with metaphysics. Kant, on the contrary, denied all speculative communication between them. Neither Kant nor Descartes could unite metaphysics and ethics. Neither of these philosophers could integrate physics, metaphysics, and theology and still permit each science to retain its own distinctive method. St. Thomas was able to do so because of his theory of abstraction and his Aristotelian metaphysics of man and being.

For the correlate of critical realism as an epistemology was an Aristotelian metaphysics of man. In the judgment of reflexive consciousness, consciousness revealed itself immediately as a mode of real being. Consequently its dynamic motion could not be explained through the intentional structures of Husserl's phenomenology. Consciousness was a metaphysical reality. Therefore its functioning must be explained through the Aristotelian causes of real motion. The diverse intentional levels of man's abstractive intellect were not constituted by the temporality of Husserl's transcendental ego. They were due to the causal cooperation of sense, active and passive intellect, and the sensible object in the process of Aristotelian abstraction. Neither could man's habitual orientation to the distinct intentional realms of aesthetic, religious, moral, and scientific experience be explained by the constitution of Husserl's transcendental ego. They could only be explained through Aristotelian habits, informing the accidental faculties of a sensitive-intellectual nature.

An Aristotelian metaphysics of man demanded an Aristotelian theory of the sciences. Aristotle's distinction between the speculative and practical intellect in the substantial human knower accounted for the cooperation and distinction of ethics, aesthetics, and speculative philosophy in the integration of man's thought and action. The three degrees of abstraction explained the unity and diversity of the speculative sciences. The discrimination between Aristotelian philosophy of nature and the purely empirical physicomathematical sciences was essential for the integration of experimental data into man's metaphysical interpretation of reality.[38] The distinction between the scientific habits of the practical and speculative intellect and the specifically diverse

[38] *Science and Wisdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), pp. 40–50.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

habits operative in mystical and aesthetic knowledge enabled the human knower to reflect scientifically upon these areas of his experience without impinging upon their own proper activity. The history of Western culture since the Renaissance was the history of man's growth in self-consciousness. Unfortunately, since the time of Descartes modern man had not possessed a metaphysics of man and a theory of art and science which would enable him to thematize his increasingly differentiated consciousness in an adequate way. St. Thomas's metaphysics of man and his Aristotelian account of scientific knowledge could provide that philosophy.

INTEGRAL HUMANISM

Post-Cartesian philosophy could not ground the true humanism which contemporary man urgently needed to appreciate and order the aesthetic, social, intellectual, and religious values in his contemporary culture. For, Maritian insisted, its subjective starting point and its univocal cognitional model rendered it incapable of integrating human experience. However, any attempt simply to restore the old medieval humanism was doomed to failure. Contemporary man was not medieval man. His culture was not medieval culture. Medieval humanism was the God-directed humanism of the naive human subject whose consciousness had not passed through the stages in its evolution which had led to its present stage of self-awareness. The medieval mind had little or no acquaintance with the multiplicity of highly developed cognitional signs through which modern man thematized his experience of himself and his world in art, science, and history. Medieval man responded to God directly on the religious level. He had not yet become aware of the richness, diversity, and relative autonomy of God's created world and of the aesthetic and intellectual response demanded by its created goodness and beauty.[39]

Western man's growth in religious, scientific, and aesthetic experience since the Renaissance had passed through a progressive series of expanding stages. Mystical experience had reached the stage of conscious self-awareness in the age of St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross. Empirical science had reached its stage of conscious self-possession in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Aesthetic experience came to conscious self-awareness in the nineteenth century, largely through the work of the German idealists.

[39] *Integral Humanism* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), pp. 9–15.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The contemporary believer could no longer respond to his world and God in a medieval way. His religious experience was no longer medieval experience.[40] Even though he lived in St. Thomas's church and shared St. Thomas's faith, the modern Catholic was aware of the diversity of religious beliefs. He could sympathize with the religious fervor of the reformers. He was obliged to reverence and reflect upon the God-given mission of Israel.[41] His acceptance of God's universal salvific will convinced him that Christ's saving grace was available to all men. The experience which the educated Catholic possessed of himself and of his world through the mediation of art, science, and history was not medieval experience. Medieval man lived in the unitary culture of Christendom. Modern man was well aware of the difference between his Western culture and the cultures of India and China. He also knew that these differences expressed themselves on the level of art, religion, and philosophy.[42] For medieval man culture was as stable as nature. Modern man knew that his Western culture had a large historical component. Medieval man cared little for progress and personal development. Modern man cherished a contemporary culture whose progress had been accompanied since the Renaissance by a progressive growth in his own self-possession as a free and conscious person.[43]

Integral Humanism might make surprising reading for the critics of classical Thomism who take it as an article of faith that traditional Thomists were unable to appreciate or to respond to the unique value of contemporary culture.[44] Although Maritain believed in cultural norms, his conception of culture was not "normative" in any narrow sense. *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* and *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dan sa condition charnelle* manifest his wide knowledge of oriental art, culture, and mysticism. They also manifest the understanding and sympathy with which he reacted to them. In *Integral Humanism* he turned away completely from the romantic cult of the Middle Ages. His concern was the proper integration of the contemporary culture which he understood and loved through his own rich personal experience of it. He was not opposed to post-Cartesian philosophy because it was modern. His complaint was that its univocal model of knowledge prevented it from doing justice to the richness and diversity of contemporary experience.

[40] Ibid., pp. 162—82. See also *The Range of Reason* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 192–99.

[41] See *Le Mystère d'Israel et autres essais* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, n.d.). See also "The Mystery of Israel," *Ransoming the Time* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941). Also the collected texts in D. and I. Gallagher's *A Maritain Reader* (n. 7 above), pp. 284–325.

[42] *Creative Intuition*, pp. 3–28.

[43] *On the Philosophy of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), pp. 104–15.

[44] *Integral Humanism*, pp. 77–82. See also *The Person and the Common Good* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), pp. 90–105.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

He regretted the Cartesian revolution in philosophy because it had deprived modern culture of the philosophical integration which it should have received during the period of its evolution. The rise of contemporary culture had been a very good thing, but, with an adequate philosophy to prevent the distortions which accompanied its growth, it could have been much better.

The history of modern culture had seen a steady growth in the human subject's freedom and self-possession. Yet, despite its subjective starting point, post-Cartesian philsophy could not do justice to the intelligibility of the personal human subject. Its deficient philosophy of consciousness and its univocal model of knowledge had led to the objectivization of the person. Social relations differed markedly from the relations between whole and part in the subhuman order. But post-Cartesian philosophy, whose cognitive models were based on the objective knowledge of mathematics or physics, could not do justice to the distinctive character of social relations. Modern philosophy of society and culture either fell into the individualism of the empiricist tradition or a social and cultural collectivism, whose ancestry could be traced through German idealism to the Cartesian Spinoza. Atomic liberalism and socialist collectivism were a sign of the impasse which post-Cartesian philosophy had reached in its effort to provide a coherent theory of culture and society.

THE PERSON AND THE COMMON GOOD

Maritain's concern with the value of the human person manifested itself in his moral and political philosophy. In the early years of his activity as a Christian philosopher, he displayed little interest in political affairs. Although he had been a liberal socialist before his conversion to Catholicism, the influence of his conservative spiritual director and of several theologians to whom he was attached had brought him into the orbit of the Action Française. Pius XI's condemnation of that movement alerted him to the moral and religious danger inherent in the association of religious orthodoxy with policical reaction. Maritain began to take an interest in political philosophy and broke definitively with right-wing royalism. *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, *Freedom in the Modern World*, and *Man in the State* were brilliant defenses of political democracy. During the Spanish Civil War he was viciously attacked by right-wing Catholics for his political opinions. The Christian democratic movement in Europe and Latin America drew extensively upon his writings for its inspiration.[45]

[45] Alceu Amoroso Lima, "Testimony: On the Influence of Maritain in Latin America," *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 70–85.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Maritain believed that political philosophy was a practical science. It was subordinated to a higher intellectual habit which he called moral philosophy. His Aristotelian metaphysics of man enabled him to incorporate St. Thomas's natural law ethics into his own political philosophy. Man's deliberate acts were morally good or bad according to their conformity or disconformity to the intrinsic end of man's concrete nature. But since man's nature, in the historical order, had been elevated to a supernatural end, moral philosophy could not direct man's action to its concrete end unless it accepted the guidance of a higher intellectual habit, moral theology. Thus the relation between grace and nature in the Thomistic metaphysics of man determined the relation between moral philosophy and moral theology in Maritain's ordering of the practical sciences.[46]

Political philosophy was subordinated to moral philosophy adequately considered (i.e., moral philosophy under the influence of moral theology). As a social being, man was related by his nature to society. Atomic individualism was contrary to human nature. Man was an individual in the human species. As such he was related to society as a part to a whole. Therefore he could not substitute his individual interests for the common good without incurring moral guilt. Yet man was more than a part in the social whole. As a free spiritual agent, immediately ordered to God as his final end, man was a person. And, as a person, man transcended society. Society could not subordinate a person to its own common good as a part is subordinated to the end of the whole. For the person, who was ordered immediately to God, could not be subordinated completely to the social whole of which he was an individual part. No community could deprive the person of his freedom in order to subordinate his action to the common good in the ruthless manner of the totalitarian dictatorships.[47]

Although Maritain's philosophy of the person and the common good was not without its speculative difficulties, it placed him clearly in opposition to atomic liberalism and the collectivism of the totalitarian dictatorships. Against the liberals, he insisted that man was subject to the authority of society by the law of his very nature. Against totalitarianism, he denied the absolute supremacy of the social whole over the individual person. Natural society was given its authority by God to enable it to direct its members to the attainment of their natural and supernatural ends as persons. Growth in intellectual maturity and in the capacity to exercise his personal freedom was an exigency of man's elevated human nature. Therefore society was obliged to foster such development rather

[46] *Science and Wisdom*, pp. 174–209.
[47] *The Person and the Common Good*, pp. 31–46.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

than impede it. Consequently the state should not arrogate to itself the direction of human activity which psychologically mature men and their subsocieties could freely assume themselves. Authoritarian forms of government, which were tolerable before Western man had achieved his present state of personal and cultural development, were no longer acceptable today. Society must recognize that modern man was a social and cultural adult. Contemporary man must still submit to God's authority. He must recognize society's legitimate power to direct his action toward the common good. Nevertheless, modern man's demand for autonomy had a moral foundation. His claim to be given a share in the formation of society's decisions was justified. In the developed state of contemporary Western culture, democratic self-government was a moral demand of the natural law.[48]

MARITAIN AND THE POSTCONCILIAR INTEGRATION OF CULTURE

More than five years have passed since Maritian's death, and over a decade has gone by since the close of the Second Vatican Council. The debate over the possibility of theological pluralism, which Pius XII's *Humani Generis* cut short, was renewed on the council floor. At its conclusion the council ended Thomism's monopoly of clerical education and opened the door to pluralism in Catholic theology. The conservative side in the debate, with which Maritain was associated, was the losing side, and the negative stance toward theological pluralism which Pius XII's *Humani Generis* had taken was not confirmed.[49]

In the rapid movement of postconciliar thought, Maritian's Christian philosophy has been identified with the conservative wing of Catholic philosophy and theology. But, if he deserves the name conservative, his works provide remarkable evidence of how far conservative Catholic thought has evolved since the days of the modernist crisis. He was neither a social nor a cultural conservative. He manifested deep appreciation for contemporary culture. He was well aware of cultural diversity and was sensitive to the historical component in contemporary Western culture. He respected the plurality of religious beliefs and vigorously

[48] Ibid. For an excellent collection of texts, see Evans and Ward, *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (n. 6 above). For an in-depth discussion of Maritain's philosophy of person and society, see Jacques Croteau, O.M.I., *Les Fondaments Thomistes du personalisme de Maritain* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1955), pp. 55–98.

[49] The conservative Dominican, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, was one of Maritain's favorite theologians (see Kernan, pp. 59 and 77). Garrigou-Lagrange was the most vigorous opponent of the Maréchalian "new theologians" in the debate over theological pluralism. See Harvanek (n. 3 above). For Maritain's theological orientation, see Charles Cardinal Journet, "Jacques Maritain, Theologian", *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972): 32–50.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

defended religious freedom. In his writings, conservative classical Thomism was a philosophy of the modern world.[50]

In order to understand the significance of the Ecumenical Council, an understanding of the conflicting theologies at work in it is absolutely necessary. The Maréchalian Thomism, with which the names of de Lubac, Rondet, Le Blond, and Bouillard have been associated, was one of the great theological currents which flowed into the council. Another current was the classical Thomistic theology of Garrigou-Lagrange and the Toulouse-Dominicans. As a Christian philosopher in the tradition of John of St. Thomas, Maritain sympathized with the second current. The council's decision on theological pluralism represented a victory of the Maréchalian "new theologians" over their conservative Dominican opponents.

In the decade following the Second Vatican Council, Catholic theology has moved rapidly. Baroque scholasticism, in its Thomistic and Suarezian forms, is no longer identified with St. Thomas's authentic thought. Historical research has shown that the prolonged dispute between the Jesuit Molinists and the Dominican Bannezians was due to the incapacity of post-Tridentine scholasticism to thematize the Catholic tradition on grace and nature in a satisfactory way.[51] Contemporary Thomism is characterized by two complementary tendencies. The first is an endeavor to distinguish St. Thomas's own thought from its interpretation by his Baroque commentators. The second is an attempt to make a fresh application of Thomistic principles to contemporary philosophical and theological problems. The result of this twofold tendency has been a sharp decline in the influence of classical Thomism.

Nevertheless, Maritain will retain his place in the history of twentieth-century Catholic thought. He was not only a great modern philosopher but a great Catholic thinker as well. A classical Catholic theology of grace and nature, faith and reason, is a theology of integration and analogy. It endeavors to unite religious experience, theology, and secular culture in a coherent speculative world view. Its ideal remains a "Catholic mind" which is the result of a speculative integration of religious faith and secular culture.

The syntheses of Rahner, Lonergan, and von Balthasar, which have replaced Maritain's integrative synthesis today, are linked, more or less

[50] Paul VI credited Maritain with a good part of the inspiration for his famous encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*, which has given strong support to the struggle for political and economic liberation in the Third World.

[51] See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Grace and Freedom* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), pp. 109–15, 143–45.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

directly, to the Maréchalian tradition.[52] As authentically Catholic theologies, they are theologies of analogy and integration. Like Maritain, all three of these theologians are concerned with the integration of religious experience with theology, philosophy, science, and contemporary culture. Their proposed integrations of knowledge differ among themselves, and all three differ from the integration proposed by Maritain. The differences are largely determined by each theologian's approach to philosophy and by his understanding of its specific role in the unification of Christian experience. The speculative integration of contemporary experience is still an ongoing project in Catholic theology. The philosophers and theologians who are engaged in it have still a lot to learn from Maritain. They must meet the challenge of dialogue with him both to vindicate their own philosophical positions and to clarify the relation between the diverse forms of knowledge in their reflective syntheses. Certainly no one who is interested in the history of twentieth-century Catholic thought can afford to overlook the contribution which Maritain has made to its development.

[52] Although strongly influenced by Henry de Lubac, S.J., Hans Urs von Balthasar does not believe that Thomism can serve as a satisfactory unifier of human experience. Balthasar's admiration for de Lubac is due to the latter's brilliant use of the fathers in his theology.

This content downloaded from
181.23.194.27 on Thu, 08 Oct 2020 18:26:44 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms