

Jacques Maritain in the 21st Century

“A clear and exciting journey with and beyond Jacques Maritain’s options on justice. While doing justice to these, Walter Schultz highlights their importance for both individuals and communities in the XXIst century, without sacrificing the one for the other! It is an enticing invitation to revisit Maritain!”

—Maxime Allard, O.P.

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“Bridging the divide between Jews and Christians, and between Judaism and Christianity, has been an ongoing process since World War II. Walter Schultz reveals the relevance and potential impact of the thinking of Jacques Maritain upon this process. He shows how Maritain recognized the essential role of Israel, including the modern State of Israel, and the Jewish people in his notion of “the political organization of the world.” And finally, Dr. Schultz engages with the emerging role of Messianic Judaism within the Jewish-Christian conversation, and its relevance to the thought of Maritain. He provides a groundbreaking discussion that should help Christians and Jews reach a deeper understanding of each other, and the part each plays in the divine economy.”

—Rabbi Russ Resnik, editor

Keshet: A Journal of Messianic Judaism

and co-author with Mark Kinzer of the recently-released *Besorah: The Resurrection of Jerusalem and the Healing of a Fractured Gospel*.

Jacques Maritain in the 21st Century:

Personalism and the Political Organization of the World

By

Walter Schultz

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Jacques Maritain in the 21st Century:
Personalism and the Political Organization of the World

By Walter Schultz

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-7827-5

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-7827-2

Dedicated to the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and to all those who are persecuted for righteousness sake in every generation.

Here we are faced with a major problem which has long tormented this old philosopher: the problem – I will not say of a *World Government*, for this term tends to be too equivocal – I prefer to say a supranational political authority consisting, not of a world-wide empire or a world super-State, but of a real *political organization of the world*, based on the free consent and the free cooperation of nations and peoples.

—Jacques Maritain, *Untrammelled Approaches*, The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain, Volume 20, trans. Bernard Doering (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 202.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank all those students and colleagues who have questioned and commented on my papers delivered at so many conferences over the years. Many of these papers (after corrections, additions and eliminations thanks to the observations of my peers) comprise the chapters of this book. Within the *Canadian Jacques Maritain Association*, I am especially indebted to the steadfast advice and encouragement of William Sweet, past president of the association whose scholarship and involvement with academic organizations on a global basis are beyond exemplary. Two noted past presidents of the association, Fr. Lawrence Dewan, O.P. and Leslie Armour, have enlightened me throughout many formal and informal conversations over the years. I would also like to acknowledge Gérard Vallée, who supervised my two graduate theses at McMaster University, along with John C. Robertson and Ben F. Meyer who also directed me. I will be eternally grateful for their remarkable stamina in the face of my obstinate obsession with Jacques Maritain! I would be loath if I did not mention my gratitude to Ralph McInerny for his generosity and informative conversation during my stay at the University of Notre Dame while working on my doctoral dissertation. I must thank Barbara, my wife, for her patience and invaluable technical assistance in putting together the compilation of my papers presented here. Over the years, Barbara has also assisted in the preparation of each paper before delivery at a conference and submission for publication. Having read the preface, it should come as no surprise that ultimately I am grateful to that often enigmatic and perplexing, but also often lucid and reassuring Jew, Jesus.

FOREWORD

DR WALTER SCHULTZ AND THE CANADIAN JACQUES MARITAIN ASSOCIATION

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ASSOCIATION / L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE

JACQUES-MARITAIN

For some 45 years, Dr Walter Schultz has read and studied the work of Jacques Maritain. From the time of his graduate studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, and through his participation in the activities of the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association /l'association canadienne Jacques-Maritain (CJMA) up to the present day, Dr Schultz has made significant contributions both to the understanding of Maritain's thought and to its application to the contemporary world.

Dr Schultz's initial research covered two distinct areas of academic work on Maritain: "Intellectual Intuition and Mystical Experience in the Realism of Jacques Maritain" (which was the topic of his M.A. thesis) and "Jacques Maritain's Social Critique and his Personalism" (which was the theme of his PhD thesis). It is the latter theme, however, that came to take pride of place in Dr Schultz's scholarly explorations; most of this has been carried out through, or in relation to the work of the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association.

More than 20 years ago, Dr Schultz addressed some of the key issues at the 'Maritain, Newman and the Future of the University' Conference held at Collège dominicain, in Ottawa, Ontario, where he gave a paper entitled "Beyond Tolerance: Integral Personalism as a Foundation for the Recognition of Diverse Spiritual Families within Catholic Education."

Since then, almost annually, Dr Schultz has presented research on Maritain at the annual CJMA fall meetings. Since 2007, he has also been an active participant in the meetings of the Association that take place with the Canadian Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Dr. Schultz has also contributed to research on Maritain, serving as Associate Editor (2002-06 and 2017-18) and as Editor (2007-16) of the scholarly journal of the CJMA, *Maritain Studies/Études Maritainiennes*. During this period, more than 100 articles, critical studies, and book reviews appeared as a result of his editorial work. From 2009 to 2016, he also served as President of the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association. Part of this work involved organising or co-organising the annual meetings, but part also involved representing the CJMA internationally, at the meetings of the American Maritain Association and at the Istituto Internazionale Jacques Maritain (IIJM), in Rome. As such, he was one of the guest speakers at the French Embassy to the Vatican, in Rome, for the 40th year celebration of IIJM, and was one of the plenary speakers at the 38th Meeting of the American Maritain Association in San Francisco.

The present volume is the culmination of Dr Schultz's many years of work on Maritain, drawing primarily on his papers given to the CJMA, but also on texts delivered at other scholarly meetings. It represents a significant effort at both unpacking the arguments and insights of Maritain and showing their contribution to the contemporary world.

PREFACE

Let us begin on a personal note. I first encountered Jacques Maritain through a chance reading of his wife Raïssa's *Memoirs*.¹ This was in 1976, while as a married Roman Catholic considering ministry I was enrolled in the Permanent Diaconate Programme with St. Michael's College, in the Toronto School of Theology with the University of Toronto, Ontario. By that time, as an expatriate hailing from the rough edges of Newark, New Jersey, I was comfortably imbedded within the comparatively mild cultural matrix sustaining Canadian society. I soon became intrigued with Jacques' biography as Raïssa traced the journey of a radical agnostic revolutionary activist of the left through his conversion to Roman Catholicism, his stagnation as a somewhat bewildered dupe affiliated with the Christian right in France, and his return to the left from a more seasoned perspective as a Christian philosopher and activist.

Jacques' story was reflected in the biographies of many who awakened during the social and political tumult which was the 1960's, and it most certainly was reflected in my own story. For me, discovering Jacques Maritain was a healing balm. I was an avowed atheist and leftist radical who as a teenager lived through the uprisings in Newark, New Jersey in 1967 and 1968, and as a student at the newly formed Essex County Community College and Rutgers University in Newark, made summer pilgrimages to the University of Berkeley in California and Kent State University in Ohio during the time of their troubles. After a summer of remarkable encounters and experiences, I was awakened to the foibles and contradictions of the radical left and counter-culture while encountering and coming to accept, please hold on for the parenthetical qualifier, Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour (admittedly a corny, worn and far too often judgemental and even fallacious manner of speech, but there is really no better way of coming to the point).

Eventually, I returned to the Catholic world of my childhood, with its sacraments and saints, and soon became a dupe of the Christian right

¹ Raïssa Oumansoff became Jacques' wife and sustaining inspiration throughout their long life together. See Raïssa Maritain, *We have been Friends Together and Adventures in Grace: The Memoirs of Raïssa Maritain*, trans. Julie Kernan, Image Books (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961).

during my supposedly apolitical phase (“supposedly,” since “apolitical” is a misnomer designating one who however inadvertently supports the politics of the status quo). Perhaps it was during this time, while nestled within the comforting withdrawal from the upheaval in the secular world around me, that I unwittingly came closer than ever before to fulfilling the famous dictum from my discarded bohemian life style, a dictum coined by Dr. Timothy Leary, the high priest of the psychedelic retreat from worldly affairs: “turn on, tune in and drop out.” Ironically, it was while trying to adhere to the perceived moral code demanded by my new Christian faith that I more fully succumbed to the allure of an intoxicating and numbing drug – only this time it was “religion” functioning as the “opium of the people.” At that stage in my pilgrimage, I allowed myself to become oblivious to the formerly cherished wisdom of Karl Marx.

As with Maritain, social and political circumstances began to awaken me to the foibles and contradictions of the Christian right. I soon came to rediscover the truths which attracted me while buried within the impetuous, juvenile and often misguided efforts of the radical new left. With greater maturity, I once again came to appreciate the many unpolished gems strewn throughout the antics of the counter-culture.

I never became a Permanent Deacon in the Roman Catholic Church, but went on to pursue my graduate studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, eventually attaining my MA and PhD with both theses written on Maritain: a study of his metaphysical and mystical writings followed by a look at his social and political thought. I went on to hold a Maritain Chair at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, develop a philosophy program based on Maritain’s philosophy on the secondary level with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board in Ontario, and develop and teach a course on Maritain at St. Jerome’s University with the University of Waterloo, Ontario.

My work on Maritain and the application of his thought to current issues ushered me into the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association in 1998. Since then, through my publications and serving for seven years as president of the association as well as editor of the association’s journal, *Études maritainiennes-Maritain Studies*, I have come to ever more deeply appreciate Maritain’s message for the tumultuous opening decades of the twenty-first century, continuing to give talks on Maritain and current issues in universities in Canada and the United States.

The quest for liberation defines Jacques Maritain, from his rebellious youth through his yearning for sainthood as one of the twentieth century’s leading Christian philosophers in the Thomist tradition (adhering to the fundamental insights of the thirteenth century philosopher, theologian and

Doctor of the Church, St. Thomas Aquinas).² In his philosophical and theological work, Maritain offers us a temporal ideal for a universal, inclusive struggle for justice while retaining the unique contribution and centrality of Jesus Christ. Maritain came to appreciate the irreplaceable grandeur of every human person as the key to unlock the tension, and far too often open hostility, between the proponents of individualism and collectivism throughout the twentieth century: individualism culminating in the “me first” mentality behind the “sink or swim” competitive jungle which is unbridled capitalism, and collectivism culminating in the “herd mentality” of communism or fascism. Rejecting the egocentric isolation rampant throughout liberal society and culture, which fuelled a pervasive pleasure seeking consumerism enticing individuals to participate in the competitive drive to the top, along with the totalitarian collectivism so forcefully present left and right, Maritain promoted the human person in history, open by way of nature and grace to integral liberation and redemption through community.

Arguably, the poignant contest of the twenty-first century continues to be a struggle between individualism and collectivism, both approaches failing miserably to accommodate the person in community. It is the personalism of Maritain, with his commitment to human rights and the common good, together with nuanced and critical evaluations from within the conceptual structures of liberation theology and postmodernism which may enable us to glimpse what is essential for a truly human and Christian understanding of liberation and redemption in the twenty-first century. Here we will observe the writings of Maritain in relation to prominent individuals influencing social and political development in the twenty-first century, establishing Maritain’s affinity with Christian liberationists in dialogue with the secular left, who seek a more equitable distribution of wealth and influence, and his affinity with the postmodern critique of often fallacious modern certitudes which conceal the naked will to power through rationalisation. However, Maritain’s unique way of reinstating

² For an appreciation of Maritain’s radical journey, see Jean-Luc Barré, *Jacques and Raïssa Maritain: Beggars for Heaven*, trans. Bernard E. Doering (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Raïssa Maritain, *Memoirs*; Brooke Williams Smith, *Jacques Maritain: Antimodern or Ultramodern* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing Co., Inc., 1976); Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Albany, NY: Magi Books, Inc., 1984); William J. Nottingham, *Christian Faith and Secular Action: An Introduction to the Life and Thought of Jacques Maritain* (St. Louis, MO: The Bethany Press, 1968); and Ralph McNerny, *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain: A Spiritual Life* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011).

tradition and Aquinas enables him to retrieve a solid, principled foundation which allows him to criticise modernity along with criticising the danger of a merely worldly fixation in the Christian liberationist and the free floating relativism inherent within the various voices comprising postmodernism.

As with the opening chapter in section one, which adheres closely to the introduction to my doctoral thesis with few additions and modifications, the subsequent chapters presented here in five sections are often verbatim reprints selected from my previous publications with occasional minor revisions. Much of the material presented here has been gathered from my contributions to *Études maritainiennes-Maritain Studies* during my tenure as president of the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association and editor of the association's journal. By retaining repetitions and notation where similar or identical, each chapter stands alone and can be read independently of the others, which makes the text valuable for selected use in the classroom. However, each of the five sections maintains a singular and progressive focus, enabling a reader to appreciate the evolution of Maritain's social critique and personalism while in dialogue with the vast spectrum of ideas and issues confronting us in the twenty-first century.

In *Part I: Personalism, Jacques Maritain and Postmodern Iconography* Maritain's personalism is defined within the existential context of his eventful life, and the eclipse of the person within the context of postmodern iconography will be explored. As a reaction to modernity, Maritain's personalism joins the postmodern deconstruction of ideological entrapment while, in contradistinction to postmodernism, retaining a metaphysical foundation as necessary for fully appreciating the very human and progressive concerns of postmodernism.

In *Part II: Personalism, Education and the Church* I address Maritain's contribution to education from his personalist perspective, in this way explicating *who* and *what* the human person is. According to Maritain, education is primarily concerned with nurturing the innate pull of intuition and love within the student, avoiding indoctrination and encouraging exposure to a variety of sources (the world's enduring spiritual families are specified). In a discussion of authenticity and community in relation to Maritain and the work of the Canadian Christian philosopher, Charles Taylor, we will see how the search for authenticity allows reality and truth to emerge in those adhering to their foundational intuition and love, paving the way for community and the inclusive future of Christianity.

Part III: Personalism, Global Democracy and the Political Organization of the World explores the application of Maritain's personalism to social and political developments in the twenty-first century, beginning with a way of being human, espoused by Maritain and the Jewish philosopher, Martin

Buber, as a response to totalitarianism. Comparing and contrasting Maritain's pursuit of salvation history with the tenets of liberation theology and postmodernism, Maritain's treatment of freedom and friendship engenders his Christian personalist perspective on global democracy and the political organization of the world.

In *Part IV: Awareness and Resistance in the Twenty-First Century* I explore the contribution of Maritain's personalism to an understanding of the myriad local and global movements seeking social and political justice in the twenty-first century, primarily by way of establishing a dialogue between Maritain and postmodernism. An initial discussion of empowerment without sovereignty from Maritain's personalist perspective, in the face of what has been discerned as the twin pitfalls of neo-liberalism and neo-fascism, introduces a discussion of the futility of combat while discerning Maritain's contribution to awareness and resistance to the forces of oppression in the twenty-first century.

In *Part V: Homecoming* I look at the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, and the role of Messiah emerging from a consideration of the Postmissionary Messianic Judaism of Rabbi Mark S. Kinzer, who proposes a dual ecclesia encompassing the Jewish observance of the circumcised and gentile communities. Maritain's consideration of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is examined in the light of Kinzer's approach. This section depicts Maritain's dual homecoming, looking back to the Jewish roots of the Christian experience while looking ahead to the culmination of the Judeo-Christian mission in our collective return to the Source.

I would be amiss if I did not emphasize that the sustaining significance of Maritain's Christian commitment, which is not loath to entertain truths and the operation of God's grace beyond the pale of confessional Christianity, is evident in every chapter.

PART I:

**PERSONALISM, JACQUES MARITAIN
AND POSTMODERN ICONOGRAPHY**

JACQUES MARITAIN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Although depicting *who* Maritain is only after discerning *what* constitutes his personalism may be a somewhat novel approach, it enables the reader to more fully appreciate how Maritain's work, intensely existential as well as intellectual, is firmly wedded to historical events in the twentieth century. In Maritain's biography, we discern the spiritual journey of a very active pilgrim, navigating the philosophical, theological, social and political vicissitudes of the tumultuous twentieth century.

According to Maritain, the realm of the intellect is caught up in history. Philosophy always speaks out of a concrete situation. Thought, although it can attain eternal and unchanging truth, is nevertheless bound to the facts of the biography of the thinker. Indeed, this is the basis of Maritain's

¹ What follows adheres closely to the introduction to my doctoral thesis: *Jacques Maritain's Social Critique and His Personalism* (Hamilton, ON: McMaster University, 1982), with additional material and correction of oversights in the original. The original thesis is available on line, 2019, at https://books.google.ca/books/about/Jacques_Maritain_s_Social_Critique_and_H.h tml?id=8loyswEACAAJ&redir_esc=y&and+available+on+line+in+PDF, 2019, at [file:///C:/Users/Walter/Downloads/fulltext%20\(12\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Walter/Downloads/fulltext%20(12).pdf)

argument for the Christian philosopher.² He expresses this state of affairs when he acknowledges that a philosophical position is determined not only by the nature of philosophy, but also by the state of the particular philosophy, “. . . the *state* in which it exists in real fact, historically, in the human subject, and which pertains to its concrete conditions of existence and exercise.”³

Maritain’s understanding of the state of the particular philosophy, which one might call philosophy’s embodiment in the human subject, makes him sensitive to intellectual history. He appreciates recent philosophical developments. He asserts that not only the development of the physical and mathematical sciences, but also the progress of reflection, is in itself a necessary historical development.⁴

Intellectually, Maritain owes much to the doctrine of Thomas Aquinas. Even though the Church’s *Doctor Communis* lived seven centuries before the decades in which he himself was active, Maritain considers himself to be a Thomist, so much so that he refuses to accept the appellation, “neo-Thomist.”⁵ If the doctrine Maritain follows is ancient, he follows it precisely because he believes that Aquinas adheres to the principles of reason, which constitute the nature of philosophy.⁶

For Maritain, adherence to the principles of reason and truth entails being open to further development. In a Seminar given to the Little Brothers of Jesus, in Toulouse on March 31, 1965, Maritain notes: “. . . it

² See Jacques Maritain, *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, trans. Edward H. Flannery (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1955).

³ Maritain, 11-12.

⁴ See Jacques Maritain, *The Dream of Descartes, together with Some Other Essays*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison, The Philosophical Library (New York: F. Hubner & Co., Inc., 1944), 163-165, and 185; and *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 26.

⁵ See Jacques Maritain, *A Preface to Metaphysics: Seven Lectures on Being*, Mentor Omega Books (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1962), 19-20; and *Existence and the Existent*, trans. Lewis Galantiere and Gerald B. Phelan (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1975), 1.

⁶ “The fact remains that what counts in a philosophy is not that it is Christian but that it is true. I reiterate, no matter what the conditions of its development and its exercise in the soul may be, philosophy depends on reason; and the truer it is, the more will it remain rigorously faithful – and if I may say so, fastened – to its philosophic nature. It is for this reason that far from being shocked, as are some, by the fact that St. Thomas Aquinas procured his philosophical armour from the soundest thinker of pagan antiquity, I find therein a real source of intellectual stimulation.” (Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics*, 30-31).

would be a great illusion indeed and a great absurdity to imagine that a philosophical doctrine grounded in truth is by that very fact complete or perfect, nay more, that it contains ready-made, beforehand, the answers to all the questions which will arise in the course of time.”⁷

Concerning philosophical doctrine founded on truth, Maritain states:

Not only is it never finished and must always progress, but it implies necessarily, in order to free itself from those limiting conditions due to the mentality of a given period of culture, a perpetual process of *self-recasting*, as is the case with all living organisms. And it has the duty to understand intelligently the diverse doctrines which develop from age to age in opposition to it, to disengage their generative intuition, and to save those truths which they hold captive.⁸

For Maritain, Thomism is not a closed system, but rather an expression of the perennial philosophy. He chastises those in the Church who have tried to confine Thomism within the framework of a system.⁹ He asserts that Thomism is open and capable of development. Its approach is able to light up truths as they appear in the course of history, precisely because this approach means playing in accordance with the rules of the game. A thinker can attain eternal truth, but as part of a process which accounts for the thinker’s historical location:

. . . it is indeed necessary, since man is made for truth, that a doctrine essentially grounded in truth be possible for the human mind – on condition that it not be the work of one single person (clearly too weak for such a work) but on the contrary that it rely, in its respect for common sense and common intelligence, on the efforts of the human mind since prehistoric times, and embrace the work of generations of the thinkers with

⁷ Jacques Maritain, *Untrammelled Approaches*, trans. Bernard Doering, The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain, Volume 20 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 53-54.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁹ For Maritain, the *philosophia perennis* progresses by deepening its knowledge of being, and not by substituting one theory for another in an escalating domination of phenomena. It does not seek to solve a problem through successive conceptual constructions, as empirical science does, but rather seeks an ever more profound penetration into the mystery of being. For this reason, Maritain condemns those who seek to present Thomism as a systematic blueprint, consisting of essences severed from the act of being. See Maritain, *Preface to Metaphysics* and the introduction to *Existence and the Existent*.

contrasting views – all of this being one day brought together and unified by one or several persons of genius.¹⁰

Maritain acclaims the genius of Aquinas, simply because Aquinas was able to bring into harmony a variety of truths, which were locked away in otherwise erroneous and divergent doctrines. Therefore, when referring to Aquinas, Maritain states that “. . . his principles, his doctrine, and his spirit will enable us to change from discord into harmony,”¹¹ For this reason, Maritain believes that the work of Aquinas merits special attention.

Maritain’s understanding of the state of philosophy and his appreciation of intellectual history reflect his general interpretation of history. He contributed to an interpretation of history in various writings. However, it was not until he delivered four lectures at the University of Notre Dame, in 1955, that he made an attempt to synthesise his thoughts on this matter.¹² For this reason, he was quite surprised when an article appeared on his philosophy of history in 1948, written by Charles Journet.¹³

Maritain seeks to establish his interpretation of history on the authority of the Gospel.¹⁴ Basically, he argues that there is a fundamental ambivalence in history, i.e. the simultaneous development of both good and evil.¹⁵ He does acknowledge, however, the inevitable development of moral conscience.¹⁶

¹⁰ Maritain, *Untrammelled Approaches*, 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹² See Smith, *Jacques Maritain*, 3-4.

¹³ Maritain acknowledges the assistance he received from the article by Charles Journet, and even recommends that it be read as a complement to the publication of the four lectures delivered at the University of Notre Dame in 1955. See Jacques Maritain, *On the Philosophy of History*, ed. Joseph W. Evans (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957), x.

¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵ See *Ibid.*, 43-62. For a list of other texts where Maritain discusses this issue see Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), 28.

¹⁶ “I think that this progress of moral conscience as to the explicit knowledge of natural law is one of the least questionable examples of progress in mankind. Allow me to stress that I am not pointing to any progress in human moral behaviour (or to any progress in the purity and sanctity of an absolutely pure heart). I am pointing to a progress of moral conscience as to the *knowledge* of the particular precept of natural law. This progress in knowledge can take place at the same time as a worsening in the conduct of a number of men, but that is another question. Take, for instance, the notion of slavery. We are now aware that slavery is contrary to the dignity of the human person. And yet there are totalitarian States

He expresses his understanding of historical change through the notion of the concrete historical ideal, whereby the guiding dream or myth of a particular age must be based on the actual circumstances of that age. The concrete historical ideal is the best possible actualisation or temporal manifestation in a given historical climate or situation; in other words, the concrete historical ideal changes. Furthermore, it may remain possible and therefore not necessarily achieved, but it is nevertheless the most desirable achievement which is at least feasible given a particular set of circumstances. Based upon the actual situation, it becomes the myth upon which an age thrives. In this context, we must not forget that Maritain is concerned with the concrete historical ideal of *Christendom*, a term which “. . . designates a certain *temporal* common regime whose structures bear, in highly varying degrees and in highly varying ways, the imprint of the Christian conception of life.”¹⁷

As an example of the way in which the concrete and ideal work together in an historical setting, Maritain writes concerning the mediaeval period: “. . . the historical ideal of the Middle Ages was controlled by two dominants: on the one hand, the idea or myth (in the sense given the word by Georges Sorel) of fortitude in the service of God; on the other, this concrete fact that temporal civilization itself was in some manner a function of the sacred and imperiously demanded unity of religion.”¹⁸

This “concrete fact” simply was the case through which “the idea or myth” arose. Maritain does not wish to present as perfect what was decidedly not perfect, as we read in this statement concerning the function of the concrete and ideal during the mediaeval period: “The idea of the *Sacrum Imperium* was preceded by an event: the empire of Charlemagne, the aims of which, it seems, were not exempt from Caesaropapism; and the idea, arising after this event, was capable of only precarious, partial, and contradictory realizations.”¹⁹

Nevertheless, it was precisely the ideal of the holy empire which in fact upheld Christendom, because it was concrete, i.e. based upon the fact which enabled it to become feasible for a particular historical climate. The

which enslave the human being. But, nevertheless, they would not like to acknowledge this fact – that’s why propaganda is so necessary – because there is a common awareness in mankind today that slavery is contrary to the dignity of man.” (Maritain, *Philosophy of History*, 105-106)

¹⁷ Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 132.

¹⁸ Ibid., 143.

¹⁹ Ibid., 143-144.

concrete historical ideal of the holy empire functioned “. . . as the lyrical image which orientated and upheld a civilization.”²⁰

Maritain is not advocating a form of historical relativism. By linking his notion of the concrete historical ideal to the establishment of Christendom, he is seeking to be realistic. He is concerned with perpetuating and establishing the good as he sees it, i.e. Christian civilisation. Without betraying Christianity, Maritain takes the concrete circumstances of history into account. He maintains that what is necessary today is to acknowledge the arrival of a new concrete historical ideal, one which the circumstance of democracy has engendered from its evangelical roots. Maritain developed this notion in his *Integral Humanism*, which first appeared in 1936. In this work, he speaks of “. . . the idea of the *holy freedom* of the creature whom grace unites to God.”²¹ Maritain is concerned with the ideal of Christian civilisation, and he argues that the idea of holy freedom is to replace the mediaeval idea of holy empire.²² This movement from holy empire to holy freedom is interpreted as a moral development which is both natural and inspired by the Christian message.²³

History, like philosophy, is the progressive disclosure of truth through new situations. That is why history is important in Maritain's Christian endeavour to ascertain truth. The historian, Brooke Williams Smith, has aptly remarked: “Although the nineteenth century German philosopher, G. W. F. Hegel, is often credited with bestowing such ideas upon the philosophy of history, Maritain holds that the credit is misplaced, and that these ideas should be ‘reclaimed’ for Christian tradition.”²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 144.

²¹ Ibid., 163.

²² See Ibid., 127-210.

²³ “The remark I wish to submit is that, considered in its normal and essential features, the political and social coming of age of the people was in itself a natural development – I mean, one which answered deep-seated demands of the order of nature, and in which certain requirements of natural law came to the fore; but in actual fact it is only under the action of the Gospel leaven, and by virtue of the Christian inspiration making its way in the depths of secular consciousness, that the natural development in question took place. Thus it is that the democratic process, with its genuine, essential properties, and its adventitious ideological cockle, appeared first in that area of civilization which is the historical heir to mediaeval Western Christendom – and it was the more genuine, and is now the more live, where the temporal life of the community remains to a larger extent Christian-inspired.” (Maritain, *Philosophy of History*, 116).

²⁴ Smith, *Jacques Maritain*, 6.

The Development of Maritain's Personalism

The development of Maritain's personalism conforms to his understanding of history. It is a moment in the evolution of human knowledge, and a doctrine of action in the world today. As indicated by Jacques Croteau and Joseph W. Evans, two scholars specifically addressing Maritain's personalism, Maritain interprets his personalism as an intellectual development of the doctrine of Aquinas.²⁵ And yet, like all philosophical thought, it emerges from a concrete state. Maritain's personalism is derived from the actual circumstances of a particular age. In other words, it has a biographical context. It is also a doctrine of action, and therefore seeks to establish a practical orientation to overcome the peculiar problem of our age.

The development of Maritain's personalism is therefore both intellectual and concrete. His personalism is rooted in a highly speculative endeavour, as well as in the actual circumstances of his biography. This dual perspective does not mean that there is a distinction between the world of thought and the world of action. There is no such distinction, even though Maritain clearly acknowledges eternal truths which transcend all becoming. Distinguishing between intellectual and concrete is therefore essentially heuristic. It enables us to explain how Maritain understands the development of thought. We have just seen how he asserts that the disclosure of truth depends upon temporal events. This is true of the development of his personalism as it is of any other doctrine.

From the intellectual side of Maritain's dual perspective, it is the distinction between the individual and the person which is most fundamental to his personalism. Seen as a development of Thomism, the distinction between individual and person interprets the human being as a bipolar being. One pole, which Maritain calls the person, is concerned with the spiritual and intellectual dimension of the human being. The person is the seat of spiritual aspiration toward the transcendent, intellectual endeavour to know the truth, and the operation of will when it rises above mere animal appetite. The person develops precisely through communication with others like itself. It is, by definition, open. It cannot be alone. It is that in us which enables us to share. The other pole, which Maritain calls the individual, is associated with the material dimension of the human being. Matter individuates human beings in space and time. It is the basis for a single human being's participation as a part in the whole

²⁵ See Jacques Croteau, *Les fondements thomistes du personnalisme de Maritain* (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1955); and Joseph W. Evans, "Developments of Thomistic Principles in Jacques Maritain's Notion of Society" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 1951).

which is the species. The individual is that which subjects us to the necessities of historical becoming. It is the seat of our animal appetite for material satisfaction, which in itself is something necessary. When through some confusion, individuality begins to usurp the role of personality, egocentrism arises.²⁶

Charles A. Fecher has drawn attention to both the meaning and significance of Maritain's distinction between the individual and the person. In his lengthy study, *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, Fecher writes:

It is perfectly licit to regard man purely from the standpoint of individuality, with all the limitations that that implies; it is just as licit to consider him purely from the standpoint of the person, with all of the freedom and relative perfections that personality carries in its train. Confusion and difficulty can arise *only when the properties of the one are mistaken for the properties of the other*; but this confusion has become such a commonplace in modern philosophy, and has resulted in such enormous errors in psychology, sociology and politics, that if Maritain had made no other contribution to the thought of our time than this one we would still owe him a great deal for the light he has shed on a most vexing problem.²⁷

Bipolarity does not mean that Maritain interprets the human being from a dualistic perspective. As Fecher indicates, the human being may be considered from either the perspective of individuality or personality. However, it is the whole human being who either collapses inward toward individuality or expands through loving communication toward personality. By nature, a human being can never be merely an animal. If, through some confusion of roles, a human being performs in a mode which is proper for a beast, such a being remains a human being behaving like an animal. Maritain argues that the fundamental option which confronts all of us is to be found here. The dilemma was stated most forcefully in his epistemological *magnum opus*, *The Degrees of Knowledge*: "It is the problem of Faust. If human wisdom does not spill upwards into the love of God, it will fall downwards toward Marguerite. Mystical possession in Eternal love of the Most Holy God, or physical possession, in the fleetingness of time, of a poor fleshly creature (for, great

²⁶ Clearly this egocentrism is the basis for what Maritain calls "anthropocentric humanism," which he perceives as the central problem in contemporary society. See Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 24-27.

²⁷ Charles A. Fecher, *The Philosophy of Jacques Maritain* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1953), 164.

wizard as one may be, that is where it all ends up) – there lies the choice that cannot be avoided.”²⁸

In addition to the speculative distinction between the individual and the person, Maritain’s social critique is fundamental to his personalism. His social critique is an extensive analysis of the confusion between person and individual in modern thought and action. He discusses this confusion in relation to his distinction between anthropocentric and theocentric humanism, i.e. between egocentrism and our proper orientation toward God.²⁹ However, Maritain’s social critique is more than that. It is a careful appraisal of the contemporary situation, which observes positive as well as negative factors in the texture of modernity. Engendered by events in his own biography, as an attempt to comprehend the needs peculiar to his age, Maritain’s social critique forces his thought to adhere to current issues.

As Fecher correctly observes, Maritain’s contribution is to have developed the speculative doctrine of the distinction between the individual and the person within the context of his social thought:

Maritain gives credit to Dominican theologians like Fathers Schwalm and Garrigou-Lagrange for reintroducing this doctrine [the distinction between the individual and the person] to contemporary thought and applying its insights to the problems of our own era; but it was he himself . . . who first took a really proprietary interest in it and extracted from it all the latent riches that it contains. The idea runs like a leitmotif through two-thirds of his books, and at times he has insisted upon it almost to the point of salesmanship. In particular it was he who brought it down from the realm of theoretical speculation and made it a part of ‘practical’ philosophy – practical not only in the fields of psychology and ethics but in the even more concrete circumstances of the relations between man and society.³⁰

Before exploring the biographical context of Maritain’s social critique and personalism, it is convenient to define these two terms more precisely, and explain the significance of discussing their relationship.

²⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Distinguish to Unite: Or the Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. from the fourth French edition under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1959), 7.

²⁹ See Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 27-28, although the distinction is developed throughout the work.

³⁰ Fecher, *Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, 165.

Maritain's Social Critique and His Personalism

The term "social critique" designates Maritain's critical analysis of contemporary theory and practice, in relation to the development of human society. Maritain's social critique is therefore concerned with the thought and action responsible for the development of his historical situation.

His analysis deals with both thinkers and events, and he seeks to indicate both the negative and the positive factors operative in the modern world.

Maritain attempts to sound the depths beneath the situation confronting much of the world in the first half of the twentieth century which he perceives as exemplified by four major options: bourgeois individualism; totalitarianism which is communist and anti-individual; totalitarian anti-communism and anti-individualism, which is exemplified pre-eminently by Italian fascism and the racial exclusivism of Germany's National Socialism; and authentic democracy.³¹

Although these categories are political, and shaped by the exigencies of praxis, Maritain seeks to unearth their philosophical roots. If philosophy is determined by both the nature of philosophy and the concrete state of the particular philosophy, the concrete events of history are themselves determined to a large extent by humanity's progressive discovery of truth. Unfortunately, history is also determined by the errors, the failure to understand, and even the blatant denial of truth attained. Maritain contends that philosophers, for better or worse, help shape history.³²

Maritain analyses modernity critically, and in some ways anticipates the postmodern critique of modernity stretching from the final decades of the twentieth century into the twenty-first century. He traces modernity back to the Renaissance and Protestant Reformation. He follows its development through thinkers in the empiricist and rationalist philosophical traditions, and in the concrete events brought about by bourgeois liberalism and twentieth century totalitarianism. He does not seek to return to an earlier age. He acknowledges the positive elements in the modern world, and seeks to evolve with them into the future. At the same time, he readily acknowledges the errors, misunderstandings, and denials which he perceives.

³¹ The terminology used to describe the first three options appears in Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 91.

³² For example, Maritain writes about the cultural significance of the philosophical idealism of Descartes. See Maritain, *Dream of Descartes*, 163-186.

Maritain's personalism is an attempt to comprehend humanity. In attempting to understand what a human being is, he strives to establish a paradigm for human behaviour. His personalism is ethical and political, and it acknowledges the importance of history. It is determined by the doctrine of Aquinas, but it is also determined by Maritain's encounter with contemporary philosophical currents and the concrete events of his own biography.

In accordance with his notion of the existential state of the philosopher, Maritain considers himself to be a Christian philosopher in the twentieth century. Certainly Maritain would be loath to deny what he owes to his existential situation, while adhering to philosophical and theological principles gleaned from his study of the mediaeval Christian philosopher and theologian, Thomas Aquinas. His social critique is the testimony of his engagement with contemporary thought and action. It is the action he himself took part in, and contemporary philosophy and events helped shape not only his critical analysis of modern society but also his comprehension of humanity and consideration of proposals for our future as well.

Maritain's social critique has influenced the development of his personalism in two ways. First of all, his analysis of contemporary society presented him with the unique problem of our age. This is the problem of how to direct modernity away from the plague of egocentrism and its practical consequences, i.e. bourgeois individualism and totalitarianism. Maritain developed his personalism as an attempt to solve this problem. The question of how to overcome modern egocentrism, exemplified by bourgeois culture and the totalitarian experiments of the twentieth century, is the initial question behind Maritain's social thought. Second, Maritain's social critique presented him with the guidelines or framework for solving this problem. These guidelines are to be found in the evolution of modern democracy, which is perverted by individualism, but nevertheless has its source in the Christian Gospel. Maritain's personalism is an attempt to develop further what is authentic in the contemporary democratic enterprise. For this reason, it is primarily a doctrine of social action in the world of today.

Maritain developed a mode of theocentric humanism in order to overcome the anthropocentric humanism rampant in modern society. Herman Steinkamp, following Wildmann, therefore correctly characterises Maritain's personalism as "humanistic personalism".³³ However, the present

³³ See Hermann Steinkamp, "Der Personalismus in der Sozialphilosophie Jacques Maritains" (dissertation, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 1967), 3-6.

study favours the distinctly political appellation: “personalist democracy”. This terminology was suggested by Maritain himself.³⁴ It designates his personalism as a doctrine of *action*, which conforms to the positive analysis of democracy offered in his social critique.

It is certainly true that for Maritain there are eternal verities. However, we have seen that these verities are disclosed gradually, in accordance with the circumstances of a particular age. It is also true, as evidenced by the publication of his famous/infamous *The Peasant of the Garonne* in 1966, that Maritain detests much of the world’s current effort.³⁵ But this does not mean that he is either ignorant of contemporary affairs or afraid to bear the cross which time has placed on our shoulders alone. Through an exploration of the relationship between Maritain’s social critique and his personalism, this study will disclose the intention of his social thought as an attempt to deal with the relevant questions of the present age.

The Biographical Context

Four stages in the unfolding of Maritain’s biography must be looked at: first, his rebellious student days; second, his conversion to Roman Catholicism, which entailed the discovery of what he believed to be eternal verities as well as a sedimentation leading to a reactionary stance in the presence of the modern world; third, his involvement with the monarchist movement, the Action Française, and his adherence to its condemnation by the Church; and fourth, the evolution of his social thought, which took place in the wake of the Church’s condemnation of the Action Française and amidst the growing turmoil culminating in the events of the Second World War. The final stage is the period during which emerged Maritain’s social critique and personalism. His experience in America, during and immediately after the Second World War, contributed to his democratic expectations, and is therefore an important development in this fourth stage of Maritain’s biography.

1. Maritain’s Early Allegiance to the People and the Revolution

Jacques Maritain was born on November 11, 1882. His mother, Geneviève, a liberal Protestant, was the daughter of Jules Favre, the eminent statesman of the Third Republic. Paul Maritain, Jacques’ father, a Roman Catholic,

³⁴ See Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 173-176; and 201-202.

³⁵ See Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*.

came to reject his faith, and after the birth of Jacques rejected Genevieve. The couple divorced, and in 1904, when Jacques was only 22, Paul Maritain committed suicide. Jacques had a younger sister, Jeanne. Prior to the divorce, Paul had Jeanne baptized as a Catholic, and Geneviève succeeded in having Jacques baptized as a Lutheran. Jacques was raised within the privileged world of the Parisian salon, in the home of his mother, and apparently Genevieve's liberal Protestantism was the dominating feature in Jacques' early environment.³⁶ Fecher insinuates that Geneviève lacked any sincere commitment to Christ, and he actually questions her motive in having had Jacques baptised by a minister in the traditional Protestant way.³⁷ But perhaps we should agree with Nottingham, who openly challenges what he sees as Fecher's narrow view of liberal Protestantism in the nineteenth century.³⁸ Nevertheless, it is true that the liberal atmosphere, in which the philosophical inclinations of the young Jacques emerged, only nourished questions and problems.³⁹

In *The Peasant of the Garonne*, Maritain states in parentheses: "... by temperament I am what people call a man of the left."⁴⁰ Maritain also asserts the need for a given disposition, whether of the right or left, to create a balance by coming into harmony with its opposite.⁴¹ Nevertheless, anyone familiar with Maritain's work knows the value of his parenthetical remarks. The old man who wrote *The Peasant of the Garonne* is telling us something crucial about himself. Growing up in an atmosphere of what one might call "*laissez faire* intellectualism," Maritain's love of the people and commitment to radical change were sources of strength.⁴² Indeed, in

³⁶ For this early period in Jacques' life see McNerny, *Rich Hours*, 5-11; and Barré, *Jacques and Raïssa*, 3-18.

³⁷ See Fecher, *Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, 13-14.

³⁸ See Nottingham, *Christian Faith and Secular Action*, 26.

³⁹ Concerning Geneviève and her influence on Jacques, Fecher writes:

"A woman of unusual education and attainments, she was accustomed throughout her entire life to being surrounded by a small group of people with minds and convictions similar to her own, with whom one might spend pleasant hours of conversation and discussion. The group always met at the Maritain home on Thursdays for lunch, and it was undoubtedly at these gatherings that young Jacques first began to absorb knowledge and opinion on the intellectual topics of the day." (Fecher, *Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*, 13)

⁴⁰ Maritain, *Peasant of the Garonne*, 22.

⁴¹ See Ibid., 21-22; and Maritain, *Lettre sur l'indépendance* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1935).

⁴² According to Raïssa Maritain, after the turn of the century, Jacques' love of the people expressed itself as a desire to struggle for the poor "... against the slavery