

Maritain's "Integral Humanism" and Catholic Social Teaching

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"Culture must cultivate man and each man along the extension of an *integral and full-fledged humanism*, through which *the whole man and all men* are promoted *in the fullness of every human dimension*. Culture's essential purpose is that of promoting the being of man, and of providing him with the goods needed for the development of his individual and social being." John Paul II "In the Work of Culture God has Made an Alliance with Man." Rio de Janeiro, 1 July 1980

For a fair and faithful assessment of Maritain's ground-breaking socio-political thought in his two major works, viz. *Integral Humanism* (1936) and *Man and the State* (1951), it is indispensable to evaluate them in the full context of his other related works, both before and after them.¹ The major criticisms against Maritain related to *Integral Humanism* and *Man and the State*, such as those of Joseph Desclausais, Louis Salleron (both 1936), Julio Alleinvielle (1945-48), and A. Massineo, S.J. (1956), were largely flawed by their failure to contextualize Maritain, which was precisely done by the trenchant defenses of Maritain by Etienne Borne, M. D. Chenu, Etienne Gilson, Olivier Lacombe, Charles Journet, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, Alcide De Gasperi, Cornelio Fabro, and Adriano Gallia, among others.² However, it is the contention of this paper that the decisive key for the

¹ *Three Reformers: Luther, Descartes, Rousseau*, New York: Scribners, 1929; *Freedom in the Modern World*, trans. Richard O'Sullivan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936); *The Things That Are Not Caesar's*, trans. J. F. Scanlan (London: Sheed and Ward, 1939); *Ransoming the Time* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941); *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943); *The Dream of Descartes*, trans. Mabelle L. Andison (London: Editions Poetry London, 1946); *Christianity and Democracy*, trans. Doris C. Anson (New York: Scribner's, 1950); *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, trans. Edward H. Flannery (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955); *On the Philosophy of History* (New York: Scribners, 1957); *Reflections on America* (New York: Scribner's, 1958); *Scholasticism and Politics*, trans. Mortimer J. Adler (New York: Image Books, 1960); *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966); *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, 1968).

² For accounts of the criticisms and controversies see Joseph Arnato, *Mounier and Maritain* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1975); Brooke W. Smith, *Jacques Maritain: Antimodern or Ultramodern?* (New York: Elsevier Scientific Publishing, 1976); Bernard Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); see also review of Doering by John P. Hittinger, in *This World*, no. 5 (Summer/Spring 1983), pp. 164-68.

interpretation of those two books is the development of the social doctrine of the Church, especially starting from John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963) and Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), going through Paul VI's *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964), *Populorum Progressio* (1967), *Humanae Vitae* (1968), and *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), and culminating in John Paul II's monumental output, starting right from his first encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (1979). Maritain's notion of "integral humanism" has played a pivotal role in the development of this social teaching. It is the purpose of this paper to give a brief indication of the connections between Maritain ground-breaking work in political philosophy and the subsequent teachings of Catholic pontiffs, especially Pope John Paul II.

Ever since Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), the social teaching of the Church (sometimes called "doctrine" when focusing on principles, and "teaching" when applying those principles to specific existential areas), has been gradually taking more and more precise shape around the dignity of the human person (human rights), the centrality of the traditional family, and the meaning and purpose of the civil community. It is through this teaching that the Church intends to act as a leaven in secular society, inculturating herself in every national or regional culture without identifying herself with any of them in their temporality and pluralism, but remaining a transcendent and illuminating force, in order to build a "civilization of love" (Paul VI) from within, or a *consecratio mundi* (John XXIII). In May 1981 John Paul II had prepared a speech to commemorate the 90th anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, but he was unable to deliver it due to the attempt on his life. It was nevertheless published, and in it he managed to put the social teaching of the Church in a nutshell:

This social teaching is born in the light of the Word of God and of the authentic Magisterium, from the presence of Christians within the changing situations of the world, in contact with the challenges that come from them. Its object is and always remains the sacred dignity of man, the image of God, and the protection of his inalienable rights; its purpose, the realization of its justice understood as *the advancement and complete liberation of the human person in his earthly and transcendent dimension*; its foundation, the truth about human nature itself, a truth *learned from reason and illuminated by Revelation*; its propelling power, love as the Gospel commandment and norm of action.

John Paul's description could well serve as précis of the animating vision of Maritain's *Man and the State*. Maritain developed this vision for Catholic social and political philosophy through the dark events of World War II. And indeed, the present urgency of the task was stated by John Paul in his message commemorating the 50th Anniversary of World War II in Europe (8 May 1995). After emphasizing the obligation never to forget that tragedy, he describes what led to it and what followed after it: "The world, and Europe in particular, headed towards that enormous catastrophe because they had lost the moral strength needed to oppose everything that was pushing them into the maelstrom of war. For totalitarianism destroys fundamental human freedoms and tramples upon human

rights.” Further he said that the policies and ideologies that led to the war, premised upon the failure to understand “that a society worthy of the person is not built by destroying the person, by repression and discrimination” have not at all disappeared. Thus he urges that “This lesson of the Second World War has not yet been learned completely and in all quarters. And yet it remains and must stand as a warning for the next millennium.”

John Paul II serves as a sentinel in the tradition of Maritain; he continues Maritain’s efforts to build the intellectual basis for a personalist theory of democracy, or an “integral humanism.” Maritain was developing his thought in the historical context of the rise of the totalitarian ideologies of Fascism, Nazism and Communism, destructive of human rights and of the family, as well as of a democracy of freedom and responsibility toward the common good. When he published *Integral Humanism*, those ideologies were already at work politically, and about to unleash the Second World War with the fanaticism of a racial and nationalistic imperialism. The “integral humanism” proposed by Maritain in 1936 aspired to lead the human person towards a full development under the “primacy of the spiritual” that would eventually be fulfilled in Christ, as he himself, together with his beloved wife Raissa and her sister Vera, and in interaction with Fr. Clérissac, Peguy, Léon Bloy and others had personally experienced, particularly after his baptism in 1906 and the beginning of his Thomistic studies in 1910. Through the latter he discovered a Christian anthropology which could become a cultural bridge for all persons in a free society. His book *Christianity and Democracy* was published in 1943 “in homage to the French people” during their suffering. At the end of the war, the “cold war” broke out due to the fact that only the first two of those ideologies had been defeated, but not the third one: Marxist-Leninist Communism grew in its imperialistic designs and its suppression of human rights, in spite of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Maritain’s involvement in this historic Document is also well known. In *Man and the State* he made a bold attempt to formulate a “secular democratic faith” accepted by all in a free society as a body of self-evident or at least certainly demonstrable truths prior and transcendent to, and assumed by any legal constitution: “For a society of free men implies basic tenets which are at the core of its very existence. A genuine democracy implies a fundamental agreement between minds and wills on the bases of life in common; it is aware of itself and of its principles, and it must be capable of defending and promoting its own conception of social and political life: *it must bear within itself a common human creed, the creed of freedom.*” Indeed Maritain sought to articulate the moral strength of a democratic creed precisely to counter the very premises that weakened the west in its encounter with totalitarianism. Bourgeois liberalism is unable to defend freedom in a coherent philosophy of government and public life; thus “Just as it had no real *common good*, it had no real *common thought* - no brains of its own, but a neutral, empty skull clad with mirrors: no wonder that before the second world war, in countries that Fascist, racist,

or communist propaganda was to disturb or to corrupt, it had become a society without any idea of itself and without faith in itself, without any *common faith* which could enable it to resist disintegration." The practical faith articulated by Maritain was first of all "a merely practical one, not a theoretical or dogmatic one." People of a democratic society with different "even opposite metaphysical or religious outlooks, can converge, not by virtue of any identity of doctrine, but by virtue of an analogical similitude in practical principles, toward the same practical conclusions, and can share in the same practical secular faith, provided that they similarly revere, perhaps for quite diverse reasons, truth and intelligence, human dignity, freedom, brotherly love, and the absolute value of moral good." And yet it is of vital importance that a theoretical account be given and that it be true, for the temptation to skepticism is one of the "most alarming symptoms of the crisis of our civilization."³ Thus he says that education is "the primary means to foster common secular faith in the democratic charter." And he insists that such education cannot be neutral or cut off from the "philosophical or religious traditions and schools of thought" which have contributed to the formation of the nation.⁴

Maritain was painstakingly trying to advocate what the present Pope has called a "public philosophy" for a converging dialogue with the world as proposed by the social teaching of the Church, chiefly presented in the above cited documents of the magisterium. The accusations of pragmatism, secularism, naturalism, liberalism, idealism, nihilism, ultraspiritualism, Marxism and other niceties were first vigorously refuted by those who knew him better, as mentioned earlier. And his ideas gradually became part of the nucleus of the social teaching of the Church in the specific framework of the reality of culture, a world culture, a "public philosophy" enlivened by a Christian anthropology answering the ultimate questions about the human person and the human community.

The two Popes of Vatican II, and the latter's *Gaudium et Spes* took up this question of culture and the social Gospel. Pope John XXIII, showing his openness to the world, not to "conform" to it (cf. Rom 12:2) but to evangelize it by inculturating the Gospel, significantly addressed his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) not just to Catholics but "to all men of good will." Then Paul VI, after issuing his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964) on the dialogue of the Church with the world, addressed the United Nations in October 1965 as from a contemporary Areopagus, with the language of a "public philosophy" committed to universal truth. That very same year, the closest spiritual and intellectual friend of Maritain's, Fr. Charles Journet, was made a Cardinal in January, and in September, just before Paul VI's trip to New York to address the UN, the Pope received Maritain in Castel Gandolfo. And on December 8, at the close of Vatican II with the full-blooded Christocentric humanism expounded in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pope addressed the

³ *Man and the State*, p. 84.

⁴ *Man and the State*, pp. 119-21.

Council's "Message to Seekers of Truth" to Jacques Maritain.⁵ But the decisive moment came with the publication of the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967 in which Paul VI makes two explicit references to Maritain, one of them to *Integral Humanism*, both in its French and English versions. The same Pope went back to the idea of an inculturated Gospel through an integral humanism in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975.

And then came John Paul II, who placed the whole question of culture at the center of his Pontificate, first in his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* of 1979; then in his address to the UN in October that year; and then in his programmatic Address of 2 June 1980 to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), counter-pointing it with his insistence on the centrality of the Church's social teaching as the heart of evangelization. This entire "public philosophy" and "integral humanism" was particularly hammered out in the series of addresses to "people of culture" or "builders of society" and of a "civilization of love," that is to scientists, philosophers, artists, diplomats, public officials, industrialists and so forth.

In Rio de Janeiro on 1 July 1980, just a month after his UNESCO Address: "In the Work of Culture God has Made an Alliance with Man" John Paul II uses the term "integral humanism" to explain that it is through culture that the work of Christian in democratic society best takes shape. "Culture must cultivate man and each man along the extension of an *integral and full-fledged humanism*, through which *the whole man and all men* are promoted *in the fullness of every human dimension*." Freedom must be understood in a more substantive sense than mere freedom of choice. The freedom which Christian democracy seeks to promote above all is what "St. Augustine called *libertas maior*, namely freedom in its full development, freedom in a morally adult state, capable of autonomous choices in regard to the temptations coming from every form of disorderly love of self. *The integral culture* includes the moral formation, the education in virtues of individual, social and religious life."

According to John Paul II education has a decisive role to play in this effort, especially higher education. In addressing Professors and Students at the Cathedral of Cologne, on 18 November 1980 and addressing university teachers at Bologna 18 April 1982 John Paul II warned against the dehumanizing effects of reductionistic schemes extrapolating from science. Preserving and developing a wholistic account of human beings pertains to "the university community [which must] convincingly demonstrate this necessity by presenting the fascination of that *integral humanism* which has always inspired the ideals and which for sure responds at all times to so many secret expectations of our contemporaries." In that same year, in his November visit to Spain, he gave two Addresses along this line,

⁵ See Pope Paul VI, *Closing Speeches, Vatican Council II* (Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1965); see new translation in the appendix, p. 245.

one at Salamanca and the other at Madrid. Then, at the University of Fribourg, 13 June 1984, "Science is free if it allows itself to be determined by truth." A crisis arises in scientific cultures by virtue of the fact that "science is not in a position to respond to the questions of its own meaning. And today's crisis is to a great extent a crisis of the ideology of scientism, which persists in affirming the self-sufficiency of the scientific project as if by itself it could satisfy all the essential questions which man asks himself." A great task for culture and the defense of freedom is occasioned by a sense of the very limits and partiality of science. The positive task is that of "the integration of knowledge, in the sense of a synthesis in which the imposing accumulation of scientific findings would discover its meaning in the framework of an *integral vision of man and the universe*, of the *ordo rerum*." This dialogue, indeed confrontation of science and culture, is "indispensable for laying the foundations of an *integral humanism*." Again, to Men of Culture, on 15 May 1988 in Lima ("Cultural development both in inculcating the faith and in the world of work and enterprise") John Paul said that the Church seeks to support "a *true integral humanism* which elevates man's dignity to his true and unrenounceable dimension of son of God."

Finally, To Men of Culture, Mexico City, 12 May 1990 John Paul harkens back to Paul VI closing remarks of the council: "This unrenounceable vocation of service to man - *to the whole man and to all men* - is that which moves the Church to address her call to the Mexican intellectuals - beginning with the Catholic intellectuals - that opening new spaces to participation and creativity they may not spare any effort to reach the completion of the work of integration - proper to true science - which will lay the foundations of an *authentic integral humanism* which incarnates the higher values of culture and of Mexican history."⁶ It is the great task of culture to secure and elaborate on the basic notion of human dignity. John Paul himself elaborates upon the Vatican Council in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, regarding the mystery of Christ in relation to man which sought to unfold and specify the meaning of human dignity in three respects: the notion of the person, the human capacity to love, and the human capacity for work. Indeed these may serve as the three great themes of John Paul's prodigious output of writings and speeches on social and political doctrine. John Paul looks to the teaching of Vatican II as the basis for his teaching.

The fathers of Vatican II root the dignity of the person in Christ as he who "fully reveals man to himself and manifests to him his most exalted vocation" because he has "in a certain sense *united himself to every man*. He has worked with human hands, has thought with a human mind, has acted with a human will, has loved with a human heart" (GS, 22). The person must attempt to integrate "all realities which make up his existence in a harmonious synthesis of life, oriented towards an ultimate meaning, which is the most sublime expression of love" (*ibid*). The notion of "integral humanism" designates the goal of such a synthesis or personal and cultural integration.

⁶ This reference to integral humanism echoes "integrum humanum," appendix, p. 250.

The second aspect of human dignity pertains to the capacity to love. "By loving, one discovers that the profound capacity to give oneself elevates the person and enlightens him interiorly. In fact, love is a dazzling appeal to go out of oneself and to transcend oneself." Thus Pope John Paul speaks of developing "*the civilization of love*," which is a "very attractive goal and, at the same time, demanding." As mentioned above, John Paul adopted the term "the civilization of love" from Pope Paul VI, who in turn derived it from Maritain's notion of integral humanism.

As for the third aspect, work, it is "one of the great themes of culture, particularly in our time." John Paul seeks to overcome the ancient separation between work and culture. "Looking at the past, it is interesting to recall the scarce value that in classical antiquity was given to labor as part of culture. In fact, leisure and work were often regarded as antithetical. In the cultural panorama, even in our days human labor does not always appear as a means of personal fulfillment. But from the angle of faith, the perspective becomes larger to the extent that it renders human activity a means of sanctification and an experience of union with God." The problem of human labor and work occupied a central portion of Maritain's work; he briefly mentions in *Man and the State* the issues of labor and work as the most urgent problem of the day.⁷ But again it is in his great work *Integral Humanism* that Maritain most fully developed the idea of work and the transformation of the modern regime through a new approach to work and labor. This in part has served as the basis for the later developments of John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II.⁸

Maritain served as an innovator who sometimes incurred the hostility and criticism of many of his fellow Catholics. But now in the light of subsequent developments in Catholic social teaching following Vatican II and the great torrent of writings and travels by John Paul II we can truly say that Maritain's notion of "integral humanism" has served to open a great stream of social political doctrine. Indeed many years ago Maritain, in a moment of self reflection called himself above all a "spring finder":

What am I, I asked myself then. A professor? I think not; I taught by necessity. A writer? Perhaps. A philosopher? I hope so. But also a kind of romantic of justice too prompt to imagine to himself, at each combat entered into, that justice and truth will have their day among men. And also perhaps a kind of spring-finder who presses his ear to the ground in order to hear the sound of hidden springs, and of invisible germinations.⁹

We may well say that Maritain's great works *Integral Humanism* and *Man and the State* did indeed discover the "sound of hidden springs and of invisible germinations" whose fruits are only now being seen.

⁷ *Man and the State*, p. 104.

⁸ Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), pp. 184-91, 228-40.

⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Notebooks* (Albany, New York: Magi Books, 1964), p. 3.