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Social and political humanism of Jacques Maritain

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ASSUMPTION COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HUMANISM
of
JACQUES MARITAIN

by
Joseph W. Evans, B.A.

Presented to the University of
Western Ontario, May 1947, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Honor
Philosophy.
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Introduction

Jacques Maritain's keen philosophical genius has run the gamut of philosophical inquiry. No branch of philosophy has escaped his penetrating analysis. The Degrees of Knowledge, published in 1932, is perhaps his greatest work. In this his power for speculative reasoning reaches its highest perfection. His Art and Scholasticism, the final result of his earlier serious study of art and poetry—a work opening up new vistas for artists and critics alike—has already become a classic in the field of aesthetics. His later works are developments of his social and political thought and have been occasioned by his growing awareness that the order of speculative thought, based as it is on reality, must somehow impregnate social and political life. This very order and development that we see in Maritain's
philosophy witnesses to his eudaemonism as distinguished from the deontologism of most of his contemporaries. Freedom in the Modern World and True Humanism are the most complete expressions of his mature social and political thought, and added insights may be gained from his most recent works Scholasticism and Politics, The Rights of Man and Natural Law, and Christianity and Democracy.

Although his first interests were chiefly metaphysics and aesthetics, Maritain was also very conscious of the practical problems to be solved in the society in which he lived. This is only what we would expect of him. Speaking of the true metaphysician, he says that "he must not be exclusively an intellect. His equipment of senses must be in good order. He must be keenly and profoundly aware of sensible objects. And he should be plunged into existence, steeped ever more deeply in it by a sensuous and aesthetic perception as acute as possible, and by experiencing
the suffering and struggles of real life, so that, aloft in the third heaven of natural understanding, he may feed upon the intelligible substance of things."¹ As a result of this interest in life, in people, and in things, Maritain soon became profoundly aware of the chaotic conditions of the modern world with its Cartesian idealism and Rousseauan naturalism. For him, "the disease afflicting the modern world is in the first place a disease of the mind."² Man as an intellectual creature is superior to vegetative and sensitive creatures, but nevertheless he is at the lowest level of intellectuality. He does not intuit things as do the angels, but rather he is dependent for his knowledge, at least extrinsically, on external things, from which the intellect abstracts the intelligible form. All knowledge, then, must be based on the nature of things. Maritain had found such a knowledge in the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval master who had built on the solid rock of Aristotelian metaphysics his

great philosophic synthesis. After a profound study of St. Thomas' works, he determined to develop and to apply the principles of his philosophy to the problems of the day—"Vae mihi si non Thomistizavero." In this vocation Maritain has become a creative writer in himself, drawing out the hidden implications of fundamental principles found in Aristotle and St. Thomas and applying them to the concrete historical circumstances of the modern world.

Great, however, as is the respect with which Maritain's thought is always received in philosophic circles, many worshipers of the Myth of Progress object that he is lost in out-moded medieval speculation and that therefore his conclusions must of necessity be vacuous. Maritain himself seems to have anticipated this objection and nothing could be more convincing in refuting it than his own words from his Antimoderne, one of his first books as he set out on his new mission:

"Je n'ai pas besoin de dire qu'il ne s'agit pas là

non plus d'un attachement servile à saint Thomas et à
Aristote, et d'une manière de philosopher qui consis-
terait à répéter leurs formules d'une façon mécanique.
Il s'agit d'une fidélité spirituelle et filiale, qui
fait chercher dans leurs principes activement médités,
groupés, coordonnés, le moyen de découvrir, d'inventer
la solution des problèmes nouveaux qui peuvent se poser
de nos jours, et cela grâce à un effort original de
l'esprit. Car c'est implicitement et virtuellement,
ce n'est pas explicitement que ces principes contien-
nent la réponse à tout nouveau problème philosophique,
cu plutôt aux nouvelles déterminations et aux nouveaux
modes que les éternels problèmes philosophiques peuvent
recevoir de nos jours. 1

Maritain assails the false view that philosophy
must strive in every respect for the new as oppo­s­
ed to the old. Development in philosophy consists
in a deeper penetration of the same eternal prin­
ciples—"Real development is not leaving things be­
hind, as on a road, but drawing life from them as
from a root. Even when we improve we never progress.
For progress, the metaphor from the road, implies a
man leaving his home behind him: but improvement
means a man exalting the towers and extending the
gardens of his home." 2 Maritain strives for the in­
forming of the changing historical circumstances of
the modern world by the eternal principles found in
Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas in a manner analogous

2. G. K. Chesterton, The Victorian Age in Literature,
p. 12.
to the informing of an individual matter by a specific form. The resultant society, then, will not be simply an assemblage of new temporal circumstances, nor an assemblage of eternal principles, but a composition of the two.

Maritain repeatedly lashes out at the errors in social and political philosophy arising from the failure of men to take into account the nature of things. In this study, following the scholastic tradition, we will give first Maritain's critique of existing systems—of Liberalism, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism, and Totalitarianism—and we will show how his political humanism develops consistently, and almost inevitably, from his own regard for the nature of things.
Critique of Liberalism

Liberalism is that system of thought which grew up in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It chose as its primary principle that which the word itself indicates, namely, liberty. However, liberty for liberalism did not retain its traditional meaning. Liberty, correctly understood, is the privilege of creatures endowed with mind or reason—"Necesse est quod homo sit liberi arbitrii, ex hoc ipso quod rationalis est."\(^1\)

Liberty, then, is essentially the faculty of being able to choose between the means conducing to an end, for he who has the faculty of choosing one thing among many is master of his actions. For liberalism, however, liberty is something physical rather than moral—anyone is free

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to do, to say or to think whatever he likes without any regard for society, tradition, objective standards or authority. The fundamental principle of liberalism is absolute freedom of speech, press, politics, conscience and religion. Liberalism abandons the social, political and economic order to the government of a spontaneous nature—its battle cry is "Laissez-faire; laissez-aller; laissez-passer." The State, whose function is purely negative, must not interfere with business, for to do so would be interference and the destruction of liberty. The right to the use of private property, then, becomes absolute. Since might is right for liberalism, private property is at the mercy of individual whims, and the use of private property is not restrained by the demands of the common good or by any moral considerations.

Maritain's opposition to liberalism is based on the principle that freedom must be ruled by right reason; freedom must have a norm and a
guide—"Because of its imperfection—and because, being subject to becoming we must in all things begin with the imperfect and little by little grow up to adult age—human liberty needs to be protected: that is the important thing....And in the first place it needed a law or ordinance of reason, a rule of what to do and what not to do." Maritain cites Leo XIII's encyclical Libertas Preestentissimum in support of his criticism of liberalism:

"Nothing more absurd or perverse could be said or imagined than the statement that man, being naturally free, ought to be exempt from all law; if it were so, the consequence would be that it is necessary for liberty not to be in accordance with reason: whereas it is the contrary which is true, namely, that man ought to be subject to law precisely because he is by nature free....Of its very nature then and considered from any angle whatever, in individuals or societies, in superiors no less than in subordinates, human liberty implies the necessity of obedience to a supreme eternal rule, which is no other than the authority of God in His Commandments or prohibitions to us. This perfectly proper sovereignty, so far from destroying or impairing liberty in any degree, on the contrary protects it and brings it to its perfection. For the true perfection of every being consists in pursuing and attaining

Its end: now the supreme end to which human liberty should aspire is God."¹

Law, then, does not destroy freedom; rather, it is the pedagogue of freedom—it teaches us how to live. Consequently, in choosing means to his last end, man must be guided by law and by the demands of the common good.

¹ Leo XIII, Libertas Praestantissimum.
II

Critique of Capitalism

In the economic order, Liberalism is known as Capitalism. Capitalism has been defined by Leo XIII as "a system by which great masses of wage-earners are so subject to capital in the hands of a few that they are able to divert business and economic activity to their own arbitrary will and advantage, without any regard for the human dignity of workers, the social character of economic life, social justice or the common good." The "spirit" of capitalism is a spirit of hatred of the poor, of contemplation, of cultural values, of simplicity, of humility, of truth. It exalts the productive and inventive powers of man. Its "God" is material wealth and riches. Capitalism pertains

1. Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum.
to the category of quantity—it is concerned with ever-increased wealth. It is not concerned with quality or with human values. Everything is the object of acquisition. Internal values suffer. All the movements of the soul and heart are annihilated before the practical affairs of life. The dignity of the human person and the dignity of work are forgotten in the face of the supposedly more important problems of money, riches, production, new techniques of saving, etc. True finality is ignored, and with it philosophy and reason are cast aside. Man becomes a slave of matter:

"Founded upon the two unnatural principles of the fecundity of money and the finality of the useful, multiplying its needs and servitudes without any possibility of there ever being a limit, ruining the leisure of the soul, withdrawing the material factibile from the control which proportioned it to the ends of the human being, imposing on man its puffing machinery and its speeding up of matter, the modern world is shaping human activity in a properly inhuman way, in a properly devilish direction, for the ultimate end of all this frenzy is to prevent man from remembering God,"
dum nil perenne cogitat,
seque culpis illigat.
He must, consequently, if he is to be logi­
cical, regard as useless, and therefore des­
picable, everything which for any reason
bears the mark of the spirit. 

Maritain's criticism of Capitalism is based
on ethical and spiritual values and on the prim­
ary social value of human personality. He insists
that the rational life of man is ordered to the
accomplishment of true freedom of autonomy. Al­
though the type of economy which lies at the base
of the capitalist regime is not in abstract prin­
ciple or in its ideal scheme fundamentally immor­
al, as Marx thought, it must be confessed "that
in point of fact, and tested not only by its id­
eal operation but also by the spirit it has shown
in history and by the actual ways in which this
spirit has become manifest in the institutions
of human society, the capitalist regime is wedded
to the unnatural principle of the fertility of
money." Maritain's most basic condemnation of
this unnatural principle at the base of the cap­
talistic economy is found in his book Religion

2. J. Maritain, Freedom in the Modern World,
p. 127.
and Culture:

"Instead of being considered as a mere feeder enabling a living organism, which the productive undertaking is, to procure the necessary material and equipment, money has come to be considered the living organism and the undertaking with its human activities as the feeder and instrument of money; so that the profits cease to be the normal fruit of the undertaking fed with money, and become the normal fruit of money fed by the undertaking. Values have been reversed and the immediate consequence is to give the rights of dividend precedence over those of wages and salary and to establish the whole economy under the supreme regulation of the laws and the fluidity of the 'sign' money predominating over the 'thing', commodities useful to mankind."

We must respect the nature of things, and therefore we must uphold the primacy of quality over quantity, of work over money, of human over technical means, of wisdom over science.

Critique of Socialism

Socialism believes in the greatest possible accumulation of wealth and the equal distribution of it among the members of society. Private property, then, is ruled out, and its use is governed only by the needs of society, with no moral considerations. The goods of individuals would be made common to all, and the men who preside over a municipality or who direct the entire State should act as administrators of these goods. Socialism pins its faith on material things, on mechanical industrial arrangements, on a new economic order which is to come into being by the operation of material forces:
"Socialism, completely ignoring the sublime destiny of man and of society, or not taking it into account at all, supposes the human community to be constituted only with a view to material well-being."\(^1\)

It is not in the least interested in the conscious cultivation of moral qualities and social virtues. If it believes in these at all, it holds that they will be the outcome of the new economic system. Its one and chief preoccupation is to nourish discontent in the heart of the laborer and to fan the hatred of the prevailing economic system into a devastating flame.

In opposition to Socialism, Maritain maintains that "in seeking help for the masses this principle before all is to be considered as basic, namely, that private ownership must be preserved inviolate."\(^2\) For Maritain, following St. Thomas, the first principle to be noted with regard to private property is that all material things belong to man, considered in his specific nature, and he has the right of

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1. Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno.*
appropriation:

".....et sic habet homo naturale do-
minium exteriorum rerum, quia per ratio-
nem et voluntatem potest uti rebus exter-
ioribus ad suam utilitatem, quasi propter
se factis; semper enim imperfectiora sunt
propter perfectiora."¹

The second principle is that man may best appro-
priate material things by individual appropi-
ration, that is, by one man owning a certain
specific part of material things:

"The rights of man over material th-
ings imply in fact the power to manage,
administer and use these goods."²

In this he follows almost literally St. Thomas
who says:

".....circa rem exteriorem duo com-
petunt homini. Quorum unum est potestas
procurrandi et dispensandi.....Aliud vero
quod competit homini circa res exteriores
est usus ipsarum."³

This power as a rule can be properly exercised
only by individual persons. Only thus can one
hope to secure the care that is required in the
management of goods. St. Thomas expresses it
thus:

"Si consideretur iste ager absolute,

¹. Summa Theologica, II-II, 66, 1.
². Freedom in the Modern World, p. 94.
non habet unde magis sit hujus quam illius; sed si consideretur per respectum ad opportunitatem colendi et ad pacificum usum agri, secundum hoc habet quandam commensurationem ad hoc quod sit unius et non alterius."

Maritain then proceeds to determine more precisely what are the elements in human nature on which the general right to own property is founded; what is it in human nature that calls for the individual appropriation of material goods? He finds this general postulate in the activity of man as maker—or as artist in the broad sense of the word—an activity which springs from the very essence of personality.

According to him, the nature of man admits of two different activities. There is the poetic activity, or activity concerned with the making of things, and the object of this is the factibile, the thing to be made or produced. Man is an "artist" in the sense that he fashions material things, and moulds them to his liking. There is also the ethical or practical activity, and the object of this is the agibile, or the thing to be done. Now, it is the artistic or poetic

activity of man, requiring as it does a facilitable, which is the metaphysical basis for the individual appropriation of property—if man is to make something or fashion something, he can best do this by owning the material to be fashioned or made. It is the ethical or practical activity of man which limits the use by an individual of a specific piece of material or property.

An individual man, then, may own private property, but his use of it is not absolute—the function and purpose of the property must be considered; the rights of others must be considered; the common good must be considered. The essential thing to remember is that property must be governed by reason—function and purpose determine its use. There are no static rules for different holdings of property; universal principles must be applied analogically to different concrete circumstances. Thus Maritain, appealing as usual to the nature of man
and of things, defends the right to private property and the right to the relative, functional use of private property.

Socialism is to be rejected, too, for completely ignoring the relationship between God and man. It refuses to see in man the creature and image of God. Socialism may admit that God exists, but it "makes of God Himself an idol, because it denies in act, if not in word, the nature and transcendence of God." In this Maritain has the approval of Pius XI who says:

"Society, then, as Socialism dreams of it, cannot, on the one hand exist, or even come into being, without the use of manifestly excessive compulsion and, on the other hand, enjoys a license no less false, since in it no room is found for true social authority, which cannot be founded on temporal or material interests, but descends from God alone, Creator and Last End of all things."2

2. Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno.
Critique of Communism

Communism is based on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism advocated by Marx. According to Maritain, the social solutions of Communism, which are concerned with labor organization and the secular community, cannot be taken apart from atheism, which has to do with religion and metaphysics, maintaining rather that "Communism as it exists--above all the Communism of the Soviet republics--is a complete system of doctrine and life which claims to reveal to man the meaning of his existence, to answer all the fundamental questions which are set by life, and which manifests an unequalled power of totalitarian inclusiveness."\(^1\) It is, then, not merely an economic system alone, but a "philosophy

1. J. Maritain, True Humanism, p. 28.
of life based on a coherent and absolute rejection of divine transcendence, a discipline of life and a mysticism of integral revolutionary materialism. Matter is the only reality in the world. Human society itself is nothing but a phenomenon and form of matter. Matter is a dynamic and active thing, and this dynamism will of itself inevitably bring to actuality man and mind and human society and the perfection of human society. Since there is no difference between soul and body, man has no liberty or human dignity. All rights of the individual are subordinate to the common good. Absolute equality of individuals is preached, thus rejecting all hierarchy and authority. All forms of private property are ruled out—the title to, and the use of, private property should be in common. Based on these materialistic tenets of Communism, human society would be "a collectivity with no other hierarchy than that of the economic system. It would have only

1. J. Maritain, Christianity and Democracy, p. 82.
one mission: the production of material things by means of collective labor, so that the goods of this world might be enjoyed in a paradise where each would 'give according to his powers' and would 'receive according to his needs'."¹ Morality and law would be divorced from their metaphysical foundations, and would become instead ephemeral derivations of the economic order. The existence of any eternal truths is rejected--there are no values which transcend either the individual or time or space. There is no place for the person as the ultimate norm of spiritual existence and for his proper values, freedom and love. Rather, the person is utterly and absolutely subordinate, in all that he is and has, to whatever powers are above him.

The State, too, must be abolished. Denying the social nature of man, Communism rejects the family as the first societal form, and, as a necessary consequence, rejects the State also. The whole social order must be overthrown, and

¹ Pius XI, Atheistic Communism.
in its place an entirely new order must arise. The exploitation of the poor and the oppressed majority by the privileged minority in the Capitalist economy must be violently opposed. The "exploited" must wage a bitter war against the "exploiter", bringing him down from his high level of wealth, power and influence. Finally, when all are levelled off, when there are no longer any exploiters who need the protection of the State, society will be a single classless class, and the State will disappear.

Maritain's criticism of Communism is based again on the nature of man and of things. According to him, "St. Thomas....shows by five different arguments how the conclusion 'God exists' is imposed with absolute necessity on the human reason."¹ We see in the world things capable of being and not being, things graded in degrees of perfection, things disposed towards an object or end. To account for all this, "we are compelled....to admit a Cause which moves without being moved, causes without being caused,

¹ J. Maritain, An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 258.
cannot lack existence, contains in its purity the perfection of which things partake in greater or less degree, possesses an intellect which is the final ground of all natures and the first principle of all things. Such a Cause we term 'God'; it is pure act, deriving its existence from itself (a se).\(^1\) Man, admittedly a material body, is nevertheless endowed with a form or a soul, immaterial and spiritual, and therefore nobler, capable of reason and free-will. Matter, then, is not the only reality:

"Marx saw the essential importance of material causality, but he made it purely and simply primary."\(^2\)

By reason of his intellect and will, each individual person possesses certain liberties and certain rights. Not all of the rights of the individual are subordinate to the common good. By reason of certain things that are in him, by reason of the fact that he is an individual of a species, man in his entirety would belong to society, but not by reason of himself as a whole:

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1. An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 258.
2. True Humanism, p. 37.
"Homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua."¹

By reason of still other things that are in him, by reason of the ordering of the personality as such to the absolute, man transcends society:

"Totum quod homo est, et quod potest et habet, ordinandum est ad Deum; et ideo omnis actus hominis bonus vel malus habet rationem meriti vel demeriti apud Deum, quantum est ex ipsa ratione actus."²

The Communist demand for absolute equality and for a classless society is not in accord with human nature. Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical Rerum Novarum, which Maritain quotes repeatedly, says:

"Let it be laid down, in the first place, that humanity must remain as it is. It is impossible to reduce human society to a level ....There naturally exist among mankind innumerable differences of the most important kind; people differ in capability, in diligence, in health, and in strength; and unequal fortune is a necessary result of inequality in condition."³

It is true that men are equal in so far as each man is possessed of a human nature, created by God and destined for God, but in his individual

2. Ibid.
potentialities and actualities each individual man differs from every other man. Inequalities of all kinds, then, exist by the very nature of things, and the Communist ideal of establishing a classless society is impossible of attainment.

Communism, so intent on abolishing all exploitation, concludes illogically that all exploitation is the result of private ownership. Rather, exploitation is the result of the abuse of the right to private property. We have already given Maritain's defence of private property by a metaphysical argument. Briefly, again, the argument is that "individual ownership of material goods is based on a spiritual foundation, on the capacity of the rational being as an intellectual substance to give form to matter." 1

Critique of Totalitarianism

Maritain says of Totalitarianism that "we may call 'totalitarian' any conception in which the politic community,—whether it be the State in the strict sense of the word or the organized collectivity,—claims the entire man for itself, either to shape or to be the end of all his activities, or indeed to be in itself the essence of his personality and his dignity. Thus, according to Signor Mussolini, the State is 'the veritable reality of the individual'; the Fascist State is 'the highest and most potent form of personality'; 'nothing human or spiritual, in so far as it has any value, exists outside the State; 'its principle, the directing inspiration of human personality joined in one society,
penetrates into the soul....the soul of the soul.'\[^1\]

No totalitarian regime, whether it be Fascism, Naz­

ism or any other concrete expression of totalitar­

ian principles, recognizes any organized limitat­

ion of the political realm and power. Totalitar­

ianism subjects all things,—material as well as

spiritual and moral,—to the State. Everything

exists for the State—the State is supreme in ev­

erything. The religious and ethical basis of pol­

itics is rejected; power politics is the "ultimate
d"; the State is not only the "societas perfecta"
in its own order but the "societas perfecta" in an
absolute sense. The State is the present god; the
racial substance of the people or the national myth
or the classless society decide exclusively what
the common good is. The State determines exclusive­ly the aim of education and the aim of marriage. In
short, Totalitarianism insists that the State is
supreme in everything.

Maritain's criticism of Totalitarianism is based
again on the nature of man.

"Fascism...has as metaphysical root an absolute pessimism of a rather voluntaristic and Machiavellian sort. Practically, it denies that man comes from the hands of God, and that he maintains within him, in spite of everything, the grandeur and dignity of such an origin. This pessimism, which invokes incontestable empirical truths, turns these truths into ontological lies, because it is indifferent to the fact that man comes from God. Then it despair of man—I mean of the human person, the individual person—in favor of the State. Not God but the State will create man; the State by its constraints will oblige man to come forth from the nothingness of the anarchy of the passions, and lead an upright and even heroic life."

For Maritain, as for Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas, man is a social and political animal. The human person craves social and political life, not only with regard to the family community, but also with regard to the civil community. Man tends, then, by his very nature to social life and to communion, not only because of the needs of human nature, by reason of which each one of us has need of others for his material, intellectual and moral life, but also because of the desire of that human nature to express itself to others in acts of intelligence and love. As a person, man is an individual substance of a

rational nature, more a whole than a part and more independent than servile. Now, by reason of certain things that are in him, by reason of the fact that he is an individual of a species, man in his entirety would belong to society, but not by reason of himself as a whole. By reason of still other things that are in him, by reason of the ordering of his personality as such to the absolute, man transcends society. Totalitarianism, then, is false, based as it is on a false notion of the nature of man and of society. The distinction between the individual and the person and the implications of the notion of personality will be discussed at greater length shortly as the fundamental principle of Maritain's own social philosophy.

We have seen how Maritain bases his criticism of Liberalism, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism and Totalitarianism, on the nature of man and of things. His arguments are almost wholly metaphysical, and when he resorts to arguments
from expediency, it is merely to substantiate the metaphysical arguments.
Maritain's own conception of political society is "based... upon the reality of human nature and the human person, and it develops from its own principles in a necessary manner."¹ He himself calls it a "humanist political philosophy, or a political humanism."² Before proceeding to show in detail the development of Maritain's thought from the nature of things, it will be best, for the sake of clarity and perspective, to mention the keynotes of the system. Maritain's society, then, would be personalist, communal, pluralist, and founded on the ordered relationship of the spiritual and the temporal.

The basic principle of Maritain's whole social philosophy is the distinction between the

¹. J. Maritain, The Rights of Man and Natural Law, p. 50.
². Ibid.
individual and the person. Man is an individual, but he is also a person, and, by drawing out all the hidden implications of this distinction, Maritain fashions his political humanism. The distinction is not a new one—"it is indeed a classic distinction, belonging to the intellectual heritage of humanity." It is fundamental in the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas. Maritain, however, is one of the first Thomists to apply the distinction in all its fulness to social problems:

"After attempting to explain how man is as a whole an individual and also as a whole a person, and how at the same time the focus of individuality is quite distinct from that of personality, I will consider the applications of this distinction, especially in social matters."

Man is an individual, just as any other reality outside the mind is an individual. Within the mind things are in a state of universality; outside the mind things are in a state of individuality. Material things are individual. Angels, too, are individual essences. The Divine Essence itself is supremely individual. In the

2. Ibid., p. 56.
case of pure spirits, of pure forms unalloyed
with any matter, the very form itself is the
principle of individuation. But, according to
St. Thomas Aquinas, in the case of material
beings composed of matter and form, and there­
fore in man, the principle of individuation is
matter—"materia signata". Matter is the prin­
ciple of division; it seeks to occupy a certain
position, to have quantity, to be determined.
By matter, Maritain, following St. Thomas, un­
derstands prime matter—materia prima—"able
neither to be nor to be thought by itself, and
from which all corporeal beings are made."¹
Prime matter in itself is nothing actual; it
is a principle in itself wholly indeterminate,
incapable of separate existence, but capable
of being actualized or 'informed' by a form—
this form being an active principle determin­
ing the prime matter, constituting with it
one single thing actually existing, making it
to be this or that particular thing.

¹ Scholasticism and Politics, p. 60.
Man, then, is an individual substance made up of matter and form, of body and soul. Descartes maintained that the soul—thought—was one thing, complete in itself, and that the body—extension—was another thing, complete in itself. But this is not so. Rather, body and soul are two substantial co-principles, incomplete in themselves, uniting to form one complete being, man. For Maritain, therefore, following St. Thomas, man, as every other corporeal being, has prime matter as the metaphysical root of his individuality.

Man, however, while admittedly an animal and an individual, is unlike other animals or individuals. Man is an individual endowed with intellect and will, and therefore a person—"persona est individua substantia naturae rationabilis."¹ The metaphysical root of personality lies in the subsistence of a spiritual nature. Through his intellect and will, man transcends matter; he is a small world unto himself, he is responsible for his activities,

¹. Boethius, The Theological Tractates, ed. by H.F. Stewart and E. K. Rand, p. 84.
unlike anything else in the world; he becomes more independent than servile, more a whole than a part, more spiritual than physical—"the person is a reality, which, subsisting spiritually, constitutes a universe by itself and an independent whole (relatively independent), in the great whole of the universe and facing the transcendent Whole, which is God."¹ Of all God's creatures, man most closely resembles the Creator—"persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura, sicut subsistens in rationali natura."² Man is the very image of God, for God is pure spirit, and man, possessed of a spiritual nature, capable of knowing and loving, and endowed with the life of grace, may know and love God as He knows and loves Himself. It is important to note, however, that while man is a person, he is not a pure person, just as he is not a pure spirit—

"The notion of person is an analogous notion which is realized in different

degrees and on essentially different planes of ontological being."¹

Man, possessed of intellect and will, is at the highest level of animality, but also at the lowest level of intellectuality, because the intellectual form in man informs matter and is therefore subject to all the weaknesses of individuation by "materia signata". Man, then, at the lowest level of intellectuality, is also at the lowest level of personality, since the intellect or spirit, as we have seen, is the metaphysical root of personality. For this reason, "personality in the case of man is precarious and always in peril and must be achieved by a kind of progress."²

Man, then, has two metaphysical aspects—he is at one and the same time both an individual and a person. These, again, are not two separate things. There is not in men one reality called individuality and another reality called personality. The same being is, in one sense, an individual, and, in another sense, a person.

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¹ Freedom in the Modern World, p. 47.
² Ibid., p. 48.
Both the individual and the person are present and active in each of man's actions, because activity is ascribed to subsisting wholes, and not merely to the parts—"Actiones sunt suppositorum".¹

It is not to be thought that individuality, rooted in matter, and therefore inferior to personality, rooted in spirit, is something bad. Rather, since material individuality is the very basis of our existence, it is something good, but it is precisely because of the natural relationship of individuality to personality that individuality is good. As long as individuality submits to the just demands of the superior personality, it is good, but, as soon as it reverses the natural order and seeks to predominate over personality, then it becomes bad. It is a traditional, and yet very profound, saying in philosophy—an expression sometimes attributed to Pindar—that man must become what he is, and it is in the nature of things that man is truly a man when in him the life of spirit and of freedom

¹. Summa Theologica, I-II, 77, 2 ad 1.
holds sway over the life of the passions and of the senses; when, indeed, the person rules the individual.

Maritain makes this classic distinction between the individual and the person the basis of his whole social philosophy. As an individual, each man has need of his fellow men in order to realize his destiny in this world. Man, indeed, comes into being only by the cooperation of two human beings, and even after birth he requires that their union be permanent so that he may receive the care and attention that he needs in his early years. During his life, he requires not only the 'hic et nunc' cooperation of his fellow men, but he is also, at every turn, making use of the material and spiritual heritage of all men who have ever lived. His material, intellectual and moral life demands that he live in society with other men. As a person, too, man seeks communion with other men. The person seeks to give freely and wholeheartedly; the person strives to use his intellect
and will in acts of intelligence and love; the person wants to understand and to love, to be understood and to be loved. The person cannot be alone—"...the person requires society both per abundantiam or as a person, and per indigentiam or as an individual."1 Society, then, is natural to man, and, without it, man could not reach his full development or fulfill his destiny—"Homo naturaliter est pars alicujus multitudinis per quam praestetur sibi auxilium ad bene vivendum."2

But what is the relation of man to society? Society is indeed made up of members as a whole is made up of parts. It would seem, therefore, that the good of the individual is subordinated to society or to the good of the whole. But we must remember that, when we say that man is a part of society, we do not mean that he bears the same relation to society as, for example, a piston to an engine. The engine is the sole reason for the existence of the piston—the piston is designed and made to be a part of an

2. Thomas Aquinas, In Decem Libros Ethicorum Aristotelis Ad Nichomacum Expositio, p. 3.
engine. In itself, it makes no sense outside or without reference to the engine. Man, however, as we have seen, while an individual, is an individual of a rational nature, endowed with intellect and will. He is a knowing, self-governing individual, a master of his actions. By reason of his immortal soul, he belongs to an eternal world—"the entire person is relative to the absolute, in which alone it can find its fulfillment. Its spiritual fatherland is the whole order of goods having an absolute value, and which serve as an introduction to the absolute whole, which transcends the world." ¹ Man as a person, then, possesses eternal values. Nevertheless, it is true that in this life man, because of his wants as an individual and of his generosity as a person, needs society and becomes, in a very real sense, a part of society. Obviously, then, man is both above and below society.

Maritain finds the solution to this difficulty in two principles found in St. Thomas

¹. Scholasticism and Politics, p. 64.
Aquinas. The first principle is:

"Quaelibet persona singularis comparatur ad totam communiteratem sicut pars ad totum."\(^1\)

This means that man, by virtue of certain of his own conditions, by virtue of some of the realities of his nature is below, and subordinate to, society, and therefore exists with a view to the common good of society. The second principle is:

"Homo non ordinatur ad communiteratem politicam secundum se totum et secundum omnia sua."\(^2\)

Let us see now how, for Maritain, these two statements are to be related. He maintains that "if the entire man is a part of political society, he is nevertheless not a part of political society by virtue of himself as a whole and by virtue of all that is in him."\(^3\) By reason of certain things which are in him, by reason of his wants as an individual and of his generosity as a person, man is in his entirety a part of political society. An example may help us to grasp the

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1. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, 64, 2.
reality of the distinction. Just as a runner is in his whole being a runner and a scientist in his whole being a scientist, man is in his entirety a citizen. Man is a good runner by means of his neuro-muscular system and a good scientist by reason of his ability to observe and calculate. We cannot separate the runner or the scientist from the man in a runner or a scientist. When we see a runner or a scientist coming towards us, we cannot properly say that the runner or the scientist is coming and that the man is not coming. Likewise, a man is a part of society by reason of his wants as an individual and of his generosity as a person, and so the whole man is a part of society. For this reason, man may even be called upon to give his life for society. However, a runner, though he is a runner in his entirety, is not a runner, for instance, by reason of his knowledge of the Bible. By his knowledge of the Bible he belongs to a different order. Likewise, man, though he is a part of society, is a part
of society by his needs, not by his relation to absolute truth and to his ultimate destiny. By reason of the ordering of the human person to these absolute values, each individual man has rights which exist neither by the State nor for the State--indeed, in a very real sense, man transcends all human society.

Having distinguished the individual and the person, and having seen some of the implications of the distinction, it is only now that we may briefly define society. Society is a grouping of men to obtain a common end by common effort. The material cause of society is men. Society is made up of individual men, and man, as we have seen, tends by his very nature to social life. The formal cause of society is the grouping of men for a common good. Society is not mere multiplicity--in society there must be a prevailing unity. This social unity is to be provided by the common end, which is to be procured by common effort.

This communal nature of society is one of
the pivotal points of Maritain's political humanism. Society is communal, and this means that society is ordered to a common good which is specifically different from the sum-total of the individual goods of individual persons, and which, at the same time, is nobler than the individual good, in so far as the individual, 'qua' individual, is a part of the social whole. Maritain contends that the common good is not a mere sum, that it is a new objective good essentially different from the sum of the goods of the individuals—it is the good proper to human persons as persons:

"The common good of society is neither a mere collection of private goods, nor the good proper to a whole, which (as in the case of the species with regard to its individual members, or the hive with regard to the bees) draws the parts to itself alone, and sacrifices these parts to itself. It is the good human life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons, the good life of totalities at once carnal and spiritual, and principally spiritual...."

This notion of the common good is the logical outcome of Maritain's idea of society as a society, not merely of individuals, but of persons.

1. The Rights of Man and Natural Law, p. 8.
Since the State is a reality, it must have a specific mode of being, namely, social being, and therefore it must have a specific end and purpose. Consequently, this end is qualitatively distinct from the private good of the individual and any kind of summation of such private goods.

"The common good... is the good human life of the multitude, of a multitude of persons, the good life of totalities at once carnal and spiritual,..." What does this really mean? We have seen that men live in society because they have material and spiritual needs. The common good, considered in its material aspects, would include such things as roads, bridges, railways, canals, etc., which are used by all members of society. Factories, too, which manufacture shoes, automobiles, etc., would be parts of the common good, because their products are acquired by various members of society for their use. All natural resources and establishments concerned with the utilization of natural resources are parts
of the common good. But we have seen, too, that man as a person is a spiritual nature, and therefore the highest good of man is his moral and intellectual good. Society is organized to serve human beings. When we say, therefore, that the common good is principally the good life of spiritual totalities, we mean that it is primarily full intellectual and moral life, or a communication in intellectual and moral perfection. We must make clear, however, that the fact that ultimately spiritual perfection is the end of social life does not detract from the importance of material goods or of the economic order in society. Pius XI calls the economic order "a fundamental order,"¹ and this statement is justified by the nature of things. Man is made up of body and soul, and his perfection does not consist in getting rid of the body. Man is not made of pure spirit. He is rather made of matter and form, of body and soul, two substances incomplete in themselves, uniting to form one complete being. For man,

¹. Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno.
then, in his earthly life, the material life and the spiritual life form one life, in which the spiritual life should be the specifying, determining element.

The good of the individual members of society is subordinate to the common good in purely social matters which concern man's temporal happiness:

"Bonum universi est majus quam bonum particulare unius, si accipiatur utrunque in eodem genere."  

The common good, however, does not take precedence over the individual good when matters of grace or conscience, human personal liberties, or natural rights and duties are involved:

"Bonum gratiae unius majus est quam bonum naturae totius universi."

These values, by reason of man's orientation as a person to the absolute, are superior to any demands of the common good.

The common good, then, is for man an end or a purpose, but it is not his final end. The natural ultimate end of all men is God, and it

2. Ibid.
is essential that the common good respect and serve the natural order. Maritain calls the common good an "intermediate or infravelent end".¹ He concedes that the common good is a final end in a given order: "finis ultimus secundum quid"² but in itself relative or subordinate, intermediate or infravelent, to an absolute final end: "finis ultimus simpliciter".³ The common good is specifically different from the absolute final end of man, but it is part of its very essence that it be subordinated to that final end. It is a good and noble end in itself, but precisely so because of its role as an intermediate, infravelent end, subordinate to the ultimate end of man. It loses its goodness when it disregards this natural order and makes of itself an ultimate end.

The application of this concept of final ends in distinct genera to social and political philosophy is one of Maritain's most original contributions. It witnesses to his keen grasp of the specific value for our particular time.

¹. True Humanism, p. 127.
². Ibid.
³. Ibid.
of a principle formulated, but not fully developed, in the writings of Aristotle and St. Thomas. In the words of Dr. Gerald Phelan, a great admirer and student of Maritain, "this conception of political theory is fraught with weighty consequences for the doctrine of right and obligation in its application to the family and the various social groups within the State, to the personal duties of the individual both as a private person and as a member of society, as a Christian and as a citizen."¹

Since the absolute final end of man is found outside, and not within, his intermediate or infravelent end, it follows that the common good of society, or man's intermediate or infravelent end, should in some way prepare for the attainment of the ultimate end. The ultimate end of man is the possession of God, of the order of absolute values, of the fulness of personal life and spiritual liberty. The common good cannot of itself accomplish the perfect realization of this ultimate end of man, for its

¹ G. B. Phelan, *Jacques Maritain*, p. 27.
perfect realization requires the very life of
God in man's heart, but the common good should
be truly a means to an end—it should provide
the soil for the intellectual, moral and spiri-
tual development of all men so that all may
attain to God, to the fulness of personality,
and to perfect spiritual liberty.

A first essential characteristic of the
common good would be its quality of redis­
tribution. This implies that the material and
spiritual wealth of society as a whole should
flow back to benefit the individual—the indivi­
dual being considered not indeed as a mere
part of the whole existing for the whole, as is
the case in animal societies, but rather as a
person and as a whole within a whole, a "finis
cui" in its own right. The common good of hu­
man society implies redistribution to the per­
sons as persons.

A second essential characteristic relates
to authority. For Maritain, authority or gov­
ernment flows from the very nature of man and
of the common good:

"...the essential function of authority is a necessary one. The necessity is grounded in the fact that the prudential judgment is of an essentially different nature from the scientific judgment, that the truth of prudence consists in the relation of conformity of the judgment with the requirements of a right appetite of the end to be pursued, and that consequently the prudential judgment can never be demonstrated, or intellectually intersubjectivized."¹

Maritain, then, agrees with Yves Simon that "however conscious the deliberation may be, since it cannot afford to prove its conclusions, anybody can, at any time, object that a better course of action could be conceived, and the unity of action which is supposed to be required by the pursuit of the common good will be ceaselessly jeopardized unless all members of the community agree to follow one prudential judgment and only one—which is to submit themselves to some authority."² This metaphysical necessity of authority is expressly sanctioned by Leo XIII:

"Society can neither subsist nor be conceived if there is not a moderator to hold the balance between individual wills, to make of their multitude a unity and to direct them with order to the common good."³

³. Leo XIII, Diuturnum Illud.

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Authority, therefore, is essential to society and is a necessary corollary of the nature of man and of the common good. In view of the function that it must perform, all authority must be implemented with power. Authority without power would become useless and inefficacious. Authority demands power in order that it may achieve the common good, while power demands authority in order that it may even exist:

"What is of absolutely primary importance is authority. To 'gain power' is important for him who wants to act on the community. To possess or acquire authority,—the right to be followed by the minds and by the wills of other men (and consequently the right to exercise power),—is more important still."1

All authority comes from God, the Creator of men:

"Per me reges regnant et legum conditores justa decernunt."2

Just as, in the physical order, no being whatever can exercise motion without deriving it from the First Mover, so also, in the moral order, no man possesses authority over another, except it be given to him ultimately by the First Cause of all

1. Scholasticism and Politics, p. 93.
being, — God.

Social and political authority, then, is given a very high place as deriving from God Himself, but, by the same token, restrictions are placed upon it. Since authority comes from God, it may never act contrary to the will of God. Also, authority is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, and hence its very validity depends on its being directed to that end, namely, the common good. It must also respect always the prior claims of other authorities that derive from God more immediately. Consequently, the Church, deriving from God Himself, and immediately related to man's final end, should be assisted rather than hindered by social and political authority, which is only mediately related to man's final end. Again, the family is more immediately related to man's final end than civil society.

"The domestic household is antecedent as well in idea as in fact to the gathering together of men into a community."

1. Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum.
Therefore, social and political authority must never transgress the prior, and therefore higher, rights of the family.

Since authority derives immediately from God, it has a solid foundation which it would not have otherwise. For, if the one exercising authority spoke in his own name only, his authority would suffer from his own limitations and imperfections. Then, too, if the one exercising authority spoke as a mere puppet of the people, his commands would have no sanction other than the arbitrary decision of the majority:

"Too often instead of being reason in writing these laws express no more than the power of the number and predominant will of a political party." 1

The ordering of authority to God Who transcends both the rules and the ruled makes the legitimate commands of authority binding in conscience.

Authority, then, necessary because of the very nature of man and of the common good, ordered as they are directly to God, must be intrinsically moral. It must be exercised in the light of an

1. Leo XIII, Diuturnum Illud.
awareness of moral good; it exists for the hu-
man person; it may not direct the human act
away from the moral good, or towards that which
is in conflict with the moral good. In seeking
the common good, authority must not be guided
by the mere whims of the ruler and his subjects
but according to the dictates of law and jus-
tice:

"Civilization...is ordered to the 'totum
bene vivere' of the human being, and a right
moral life is the essential thing in this
'bene vivere'."

That there should be authority in society,
however, does not preclude the existence and
exercise of freedom. Maritain distinguishes
two meanings of the word "freedom". There is
freedom of choice and freedom of autonomy. Fr-
eedom of choice means that the will of man,
while it is not free when confronted with God,
the "Summum Bonum", is nevertheless free of all
internal or external constraint in its choice
of intermediate ends or of means to those ends.

In irrational animals, the sensitive appe-
tite tends towards the particular, concrete

good presented to it by the senses, but it is not aware of any objective quality in the good—
it is not aware of goodness as such, just as it is not aware of being as such. In rational animals, or in man, there is a tendency towards the universal good as known by the intellect. Just as the intellect abstracts from the particularizing notes of the object and reveals the objective form of Being, so too it abstracts and reveals the objective form of Goodness. It follows therefore that in man there is a power of loving and desiring the goodness as such, and this power is usually called the rational appetite or will. It is clear from our own experience that this rational appetite or will is free in the choice of intermediate ends or of means to those ends. However, St. Thomas also argues from the nature of man as an intellectual being that he must be endowed of necessity with free will. The argument is that the will is necessarily directed to some good that is in no way limited, to some thing which satisfies its
every desire. It follows, then, that no intermediate or limited good can bind the will by its necessity. Because the will tends by nature to the infinite and to the "Summum Bonum" for the perfect fulfillment of all its aspirations, it must necessarily be free when confronted with finite ends and particular goods which are entirely incapable of satisfying its desires. If man wills such and such a particular good, he still has the power not to will it. Man is free in his choice of all finite things.

The common good of society, then, demands authority and the nature of man demands his liberty. How do we reconcile the existence of law, the concrete expression of authority, with the existence of liberty in man? In reality, law is the pedagogue of liberty—it teaches us how to live. Man must live in conformity with the rules of reason and morality. The fact that man feels that he is a free agent is recognized as a valid argument for the existence of free-will. The converse of the argument, therefore, must surely be
given weight—namely, that no man feels it an affront to his sense of liberty that there is intellectual compulsion, or moral compulsion arising from conscience. There is no sense of constraint in accepting the mathematical fact that 2 plus 2 equals four. Similarly, there is no constraint in accepting the implications of a moral obligation so long as we understand and accept the terms of the proposition. St. Paul spoke of the freedom with which Christ made us free,¹ and in another place he speaks of our "reasonable service"², by which he obviously means the service of a free and intelligent being. This idea of reasonableness informs and qualifies the notion of liberty in the writings of the Fathers, and rightly so, since the concept of Reason gives full value to the claims of Law which are apt to be minimized, and even obscured, by those who invoke the name of Liberty in order to free themselves from the irksomeness of discipline.

The central paradox is that liberty must be

limited by law or it destroys itself:

"Liberty is the right to do that which the laws do not forbid; for if the citizen were able to do that which they forbid, it would no longer be liberty, because others would have the same power."  

If liberty is to be effective and worthwhile, it must in its own interests be constrained. Liberty is a gift of God, "the highest of natural endowments"; but it must be used in accordance with the dictates of reason and the precepts of law. Between liberty and law there will be constant stress, and it is the duty of reason to maintain equilibrium between the inalienable rights of personal liberty and the legitimate demands of law.

But, for Maritain, as we have seen, there is another sense of the word freedom, and this is freedom of autonomy. Man possesses freedom, in the sense of free choice, by reason of his rational nature, but this freedom of choice is in reality only the source and spring of the true world of freedom—freedom in the sense of freedom of autonomy. Man is a person, an

1. Montesquieu, The Spirit of Laws, Tr. by Thomas-Nugent, V.l., p. 150
2. Leo XIII, Rerum Novarum.
individual substance of a rational nature, mas-ter of his own actions and of the material world about him. Freedom of autonomy consists in the most complete actualization in the psychological and moral order of all the potentialities of man's metaphysical nature as a person. The free man, then, possessing true freedom of autonomy, would be self-sufficient; he would have to endure no external constraint in his own life; he would have dominion over his own acts; and he would be in himself "a rounded and a whole existence."¹ It is evident, then, that freedom of choice, or freedom in the sense of free will, has not its own proper end, but it is essentially directed to the realization of freedom of autonomy. The individual members of society, and society itself as a whole, should strive for the progressive realization of this freedom of autonomy, of that mastery of self and of material things, which is of the very essence of true personality. St. Thomas expressed in its embryonic stage this terminal notion of freedom, but its

precise and formal application to social philosophy is one of Maritain's most original contributions.

The pluralistic nature of Maritain's society would imply a much more developed form of pluralism than that of the Middle Ages. In the medieval order, there was a predominant tendency towards a strict unitary conception of the social structure. Pluralism, in the society Maritain envisions, would take a different form. Indeed, it is in his notion of a pluralistic society that Maritain makes one of his greatest contributions. He is alive to the diversity of civilizations and of religions in the modern world. These different forms are not equivocal, nor indeed univocal, but rather analogical—they are alike in some respects and unlike in other respects. Maritain is the first philosopher to apply the principle of pluralism to the hitherto unequaled heterogeneity of modern social and political life.

There would be for him a just degree of
regional administrative and political autonomy, which is quite permissible as long as the political ideals and well-being of a higher order are not sacrificed to the political ideals and well-being of a lower order, but there would be primarily "an organic heterogeneity in the very structure of civil society, whether, for example, it be a question of economic or certain juridical and institutional structures."¹ This feature of society is directly opposed to totalitarianism. Society would be an organic unity made up of a diversity of groups which would possess freedom and authority in their own sphere. Maritain appeals again to the writings of Yves Simon, one of his most brilliant students, for a most apt expression of this principle:

"The tendency to restrict the attributions of the State,—disquieting and dangerous, as long as it is accompanied by any sort of hostility regarding the temporal supremacy of the State,—becomes purely and simply salutary, as soon as the just notion of the State and its supremacy is duly re-established. This restrictive tendency then only expresses the fundamental idea of all philosophy of autonomy, to wit, that in an hierarchic whole, every function which can be assumed by the

¹. True Humanism, p. 157.
inferior must be exercised by the latter, under damage to the whole. For there is more perfection in a whole, all of whose parts are full of life and of initiative, than in a whole whose parts are but instruments conveying the initiative of the superior organs of the community.  

This principle of pluralism is expressly sanctioned by Pius XI:

"It is an injustice, a grave evil and a disturbance of right order for a larger and higher organization to arrogate to itself functions which can be performed efficiently by smaller and lower bodies."  

Within society itself there are many groups or smaller societies made up of individuals, and a pluralist conception of society would give to these groups or smaller societies within society the fullest possible measure of autonomy.

This notion of pluralism would apply to the economic order. The evolution in the economic order and the great advances in technical and industrial organization call for a regulation of the industrial economy which would be fundamentally different from the regulation of the family economy. The very conditions of modern production demand a certain measure of collectivization of ownership. Under the capitalist system, we

1. Yves Simon, Notes Sur Le Federalisme Proudhonien in Esprit, April 1, 1937.
2. Pius XI, Quadragesimo Anno.
have labor and capital uniting to produce, and the more this production is speeded by industrial machinery, by better methods of organization and by more fruitful means of finance, the more collectivized the economy becomes. Collectivization should not be an end in itself. Rather, the industrial economy should subordinate collectivization to the demands of the common good and of man as a person. It follows from this that both the means and the fruits of production should belong primarily, not to the State, but to those corporate bodies of men engaged in the collectivist undertaking. These corporate bodies, composed of both laborers and shareholders, would be considered as moral persons. Maritain suggests that eventually "a system of co-ownership is substituted for the employment of workers at a wage so that money invested on a basis of ownership and not of money-lending shall be subordinate and not superior to human values."1 Man, then, will be the master, rather than the slave, of the machine. The

actual government of these corporate groups should be left to the groups themselves and should be exercised by the State only when the groups, or individuals at the head of the groups, fail to exercise their rights and duties fittingly, thus inevitably impinging on the common good.

Maritain would have this same pluralist principle applied to the juridic order. Unlike medieval Europe which possessed a high degree of religious unity, modern civilization admits of wide religious diversity. These religious differences in the midst of the same civilization give rise to many serious problems. Maritain cannot accept the totalitarian solution that one single rule of faith should be imposed on all. This is opposed to sound reason and to the principle of man's personal freedom in religious matters which is such an essential part of Christianity. He would suggest that the State concede to each separate religious group its own juridic system based on its own ethical system—"it appears that one day the legislature may be induced in mixed questions..."
(matters that have at once and inseparably a civil and religious aspect) to concede to the several religious bodies within the State a separate legal constitution."¹ Maritain does not deny that there is one objective morality, but he does believe that the legislator, who must be concerned with the common good of a concrete, historical people, should take into account the actual facts of their existence and therefore, too, their actually existing diverse moral ideals. In support of this he invokes St. Thomas' principle of the lesser evil:

"Dicendum quod humenum regimen derivatur a divino regimine, et ipsum debet imiteri. Deus, autem, quamvis sit omnipotens et summe bonus, permittit tamen aliqua mala fieri in universo, quae prohibere posset, ne eis sublatis majora bona tollerentur vel etiam pejora mala sequerentur. Sic igitur et in regimine humano illi qui praesunt recte aliqua mala tolerant, ne aliqua bona impediantur, vel etiam ne aliqua mala pejora occurrentur."²

Applying this principle, Maritain holds that in order to avoid greater evils the governing body could and should tolerate diverse religious forms varying more or less from the truth: "ritus

² Summa Theologiae, II-II, 10, 11.
infidelium sunt tolerandi."¹ These various religious groups would be accorded their own juridical status, adapted, on the one hand, to their own condition, and on the other, to the general line of legislation leading towards the virtuous life. The governing body should endeavor to direct this diversity of forms towards the prescriptions of the moral law in the fullest obtainable degree.

We have seen most of the hidden implications of the personalist, communal, and pluralist features of Maritain's society. It remains for us to distinguish clearly the spiritual and the temporal, the Church and Society, and thus to see that Maritain's political humanism demands of necessity an ordered relationship of the spiritual and the temporal, of the Church and Society. Civilization, or culture (the two terms will be considered as synonomous) has been aptly defined by Maritain as "that flowering which gives space for a rightly human life; is concerned not only with the necessary material development which permits the leading of a proper life.

¹ Summa Theologica, II-II, 10, 11.
here below, but also and primarily with man's moral development, the development of those spiritual and practical (artistic and ethical) activities which rightly merit the name of human progress." 1 Civilization, then, is a natural thing. It is the fruit of an essential impulse of human nature, but in itself it is a work of the spirit and of freedom. This development is not only physical and material but also and primarily spiritual and moral. This does not mean, however, that religion is a 'part' of civilization, as was the case in pagan antiquity when a particular religion was identified with a particular civilization or culture, but rather religion, simply because there is a God Who created everything out of nothing, transcends all civilization and every culture; it is universal; it is not a part of man, nor of the world, nor of a culture, nor of civilization.

Culture or civilization, then, since they are directed to an earthly end, must be directed and subordinated to the eternal life which is the end

1. True Humanism, p. 88
of religion, and must strive therefore to make accessible to all the attainment of this higher eternal end. This does not mean that culture and civilization are merely instruments in the hands of religion, as was the case, to a certain extent, in the Middle Ages. Rather, they have their own specific end, namely, the good human life of men here on earth. Because they are concerned, however, with the things of time, they suffer the vicissitudes of time—"the order of culture or civilization appears then as the order of the things of time, as the temporal order."¹

On the other hand, religion, concerned as it is with God and with an eternal life which is none other than a participation in the intimate life of God Himself, constitutes the spiritual order which, of its very nature, transcends the spiritual order. If the spiritual order vivifies and seeks to elevate the temporal order, it does so not as a part of the temporal order but in virtue of its transcendence and independence in

¹ True Humanism, p. 90.
regard to the temporal order.

This distinction between the spiritual and the temporal is essentially Christian and only has its full force and meaning for a Christian—"Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's." The distinction, however, very valuable in itself for its spiritual and cultural significance, does present some serious problems for solution.

Maritain considers the first of these problems to be the problem of the Kingdom of God. The concept of the Kingdom of God is not a social concept; it is a supra-temporal concept. To realize the Kingdom of God is to realize union in the mystical body of Christ. What part is to be played in the attainment of the Kingdom of God by the spiritual and the temporal order? What are we to think of the world and of the earthly city in regard to the Kingdom of God?

In true scholastic fashion, Maritain considers here, too, the most important erroneous positions in regard to this problem. First of all, there

is the satanocratic notion of the world as the kingdom of the devil, as the domain of evil, as creation abandoned by God into the hands of the devil against whom we can only bear witness in the midst of perdition. This perverted notion had its origin in the Protestant Reformation and appears today in a slightly more concealed form among the disciples of Karl Barth. The rationalism of Descartes, embodying his scission between nature and grace, reached the same conclusion.

The second erroneous position is that the world itself is divine—the world in its temporal existence is already and fully the Kingdom of God. This error has its seeds both in the East and in the West. In the East, this idea has a primarily mystical nature, and, as such, is known as a theophanic notion of the world. Many of these heretical mystics go so far as to claim that, since the world itself is divine and already the Kingdom of God, man should be free from all law or constraint,
regardless of whether these laws or constraints emanate from God, from nature, or from reason. In the West, this error has a primarily political nature, and, as such, is known as a theocratic notion of the world. This would have the world, at least in appearance and in the organization of social life, the effective realization of the Kingdom of God. It is clearly opposed to the explicit teaching of Christ: "My kingdom is not of this world." ¹ Neither aspect of this error had any real formal recognition in the Middle Ages, although we do find traces of it in certain extremist theologians who believed that the Pope was supreme in the temporal as well as in the spiritual order.

The third erroneous position is primarily a modern one—the error of detached or anthropocentric humanism. This believes that the world is given over to nature and to man, without any reference to the sacred or to any divine transcendency. Either spiritual values are denied completely, or, if they are affirmed, they are

¹ St. John, Ch. 18, v. 36.
said to have no relation with, or bearing on, temporal values. The world is completely "detached" from God; man is the center of the world. All things take their "cue" from man. Ludwig Feuerbach, a disciple of Hegel, gave philosophic expression, and therefore fresh impetus, to this anthropocentric humanism which really stems from the Renaissance. Gilson, quoting from Feuerbach's *Essence of Christian- ity*, attributes to Feuerbach the statement that "God has not created man in his own image and likeness; the worship of man under the name of God is the very essence of religion."¹ This idea permeates every sphere of modern thought—art, literature, history, economics, sociology, etc. T.S. Eliot, a discerning critic, denounces its presence in the field of literature:

"What I do wish to affirm is that the whole of modern literature is corrupted by what I call Secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life; of something which I assume to be our primary concern."²

Maritain resolves this problem of the Kingdom

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¹ E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, p. 281.
of God by harmonizing the elements of truth latent in the three erroneous positions outlined above:

"The truth about the world and the earthly city is that they are the kingdom at once of man, of God, and of the devil.... The world belongs to God by right of creation; to the devil by right of conquest, because of sin; to Christ by right of victory over the first conqueror, by his Passion. The task of the Christian in this world is to dispute his domain with the devil and wrench it from him. He must strive to this end in which he will never fully succeed while time endures." 1

History is ambivalent. The spiritual order tends towards God alone, while the temporal order is a divided domain, leading at one and the same time to God and to evil.

Another problem presented by the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal is the problem of the temporal mission of the Christian. The secular failure of the Christian in the modern world must be admitted. In the medieval Christian order, spiritual principles acted in a large measure as a leaven in the temporal order. With the coming of modern times, the world, with its

1. True Humanism, p. 102.
anthropocentric humanism, has become progressively detached from Christ. In the economic order, this detached humanism has taken the form of Capitalism. In the wake of this new movement, Christians as a whole have stood idly by, offering very little resistance. What is the reason for this secular failure of the Christian in the modern world? The chief reason belongs to the intellectual order—Christians, both in fact and in spirit, are not aware that the principles of Christianity must be realized not only in the life of souls but in the socio-temporal order as well. In what Maritain calls the "reflective age"¹ after medieval Christendom, art and science and philosophy and the State became very conscious of themselves, but "there was no similar study of the social order as such or of the essential nature of its being."² The spirit of Christianity was present in many members of the Christian world, but it was not generally understood that this spirit was to be applied to the social order.

2. Ibid.
The Christian has a very definite role to play in the work of transforming the social system. A social, political and economic philosophy must be elaborated—a philosophy which will not rest content with universal principles, but which must be capable of coming down to the details of concrete realization. There must be an integration to ethics of things in the domain of sociology, politics and economics. Universal principles must be applied to the social order as well as to the life of the individual. The Christian, however, cannot effect a vitally Christian transformation of the temporal order in the same way as one effects other temporal transformations and revolutions. Christians must renew within themselves a profound spiritual and moral life and within society itself the moral ideas that govern the life of the social body as such, and then they should do everything in their power to have these awakened and vital principles act as a leaven in the social, economic and political world. The need for this
intelligent awareness of our obligations as Christians to the temporal order is very poignantly expressed by Maritain:

"The Christian body has at such a time as ours two opposite dangers that it needs to avoid: the danger of seeking sanctity only in the desert, and the danger of forgetting the need of the desert for sanctity; the danger of enclosing in the cloister of the interior life and of private virtue the heroism it ought to share among mankind..."1

A vitally Christian social renewal will be fundamentally a moral renewal. The fruits of this moral renewal in the personal lives of Christians will then be applied to the temporal order, to the world, and to secular civilization and culture.

The problems arising from the distinction between the spiritual and the temporal—the problem of the Kingdom of God and the problem of the temporal role of the Christian—are thus solved. Briefly, in review, the Church is already the Kingdom of God in the spiritual order, but still only an approach to the true Kingdom of God which is outside time and history. The world, or the temporal order, belongs at one

and the same time to God, to mankind and to the devil. The Christian must strive for some proportionate realization of universal transcending principles—principles ennobled by the Gospel—in the social, economic and political order.

We have presented Maritain's metaphysical criticism of the major social and political solutions in the modern world. His own political humanism, based on the nature of man as an individual and as a person, is personalist, communal, pluralist, and founded on the ordered relationship of the spiritual and the temporal. For many, indeed for most, of his ideas, he is indebted to Aristotle and to St. Thomas Aquinas, but this does not mean that he preaches a return to the social and political organisms of the ancient or medieval world. These eternal principles do not preclude the possibility of original insights into, and ingenious applications to, changing historical circumstances. Maritain's grasp of the pressing need of a largely individualistic world for a deep sense of the dignity
of the human person; his more precise formulation of the notion of the common good and of final ends in distinct genera; his emphasis on terminal freedom or freedom of autonomy; his more extensive application of the principle of pluralism to the economic and juridic order; and his clear defining of the relationship between the spiritual and the temporal;—all these contributions justify us in concluding that Maritain is in his own merits an original and creative writer, deserving of the serious study of all social and political thinkers.
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