Editor's Note

In how many ways—and with what degree of certainty—do we know? The essays assembled within address these questions from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints, but the thought of Jacques Maritain is never far in the background.

Grounded in the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, Maritain presented an account not only of the (more or less traditional) Thomistic-Aristotelian theory of knowledge, but also expanded it to include what he would call connatural, or artistic knowledge. Maritain was not afraid to claim that we do in fact know what we know, even if the experience cannot be taught or shared. The essays herein are therefore more wide-ranging than might otherwise be expected, as artists, historians, theologians, architects, musicians, social scientists and literary critics join professional philosophers in exploring the avenues opened by Maritain’s work.

The essays contained in the volume are divided into three parts. The first grouping deals with basic questions of knowledge at a theoretical level, or what would be called “epistemology” in most contemporary Departments of Philosophy. The essays in the second section attempt to address the social consequences of how we know, taking the political and ethical implications of knowledge—or the lack thereof—into account. Finally, those in the third section deal with ways of knowing not often taken seriously by modernity. These authors touch on the knowledge conveyed through alternative modes of experience—from modern physics, through music and poetry, to even mystical knowledge of God Himself. Taken as a whole, the three sections present a credible alternative to the pervasive contemporary academic skepticism, or what Maritain describes as the “deep vice [that] besets the philosophers of our day.”

My debts incurred in the preparation of this volume are legion. My most sincere thanks go to Anthony O. Simon, Secretary of the American Maritain Association, and General Editor of this series. Without his advice, encouragement, and (most critically) instruction, the production of this volume would have been (even more) greatly delayed. I also wish to thank the contributors to this volume for their assistance and patience.
My warmest gratitude goes out to my fellow editors in this series for their assistance and counsel. Peter A. Redpath, Alice Ramos, Curtis L. Hancock, John P. Hittinger and John F.X. Knasas were particularly helpful at critical moments. Special thanks are due to Dennis Wm. Moran, not only as fellow series editor, but also for his generous assistance in the composition of this volume. My thanks go out as well to his staff at *The Review of Politics*. Fr. James V. Schall, S. J. was an ever-stalwart source of encouragement and advice. Thanks are also due to David McGonagle and Beth Benavides of The Catholic University of America Press. And Paul Seaton generously donated his time to indexing this volume. Not least, I am eternally grateful to Professor George Anastaplo for graciously providing the magisterial introduction to this collection. He is a model for many of us—a prolific scholar, gifted author, mesmerizing teacher, and a family man of unquestioned integrity.

Finally, my thanks go to my wife and children for their patience as I took this volume through production. To my bride Jacalyn and children Evan, Caleb, Austin, Samuel, Hope and Grace—may you all know the depth of my love, and yet know that mine is but a pale reflection of that of God for each of you.

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