

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
Department of Public Information
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For release in AM's, Thursday, September 25th:

Notre Dame, Ind., Sept. 24 --- A center for philosophical research honoring Jacques Maritain will be established at the University of Notre Dame, the office of Rev. Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., University president, announced today (Wednesday).

The writings of the celebrated Thomist philosopher will be systematically indexed and catalogued at the Maritain Center. In a statement Father Hesburgh predicted that the new University unit, to be housed in the campus library, will become a place of "significant philosophical activity and publication." It will also serve, he said, as a kind of international clearing house for the students and friends of Maritain and his work.

Father Hesburgh's office also announced the appointment of Dr. Joseph W. Evans, associate professor of philosophy, as director of the new Maritain Center. Associated with him will be Rev. Leo R. Ward, C.S.C., professor of philosophy, and Frank L. Keegan, assistant professor in the University's General Program of Liberal Education. A board of consultants, composed of both American and European scholars, will be named later in the year.

Maritain, now professor emeritus of philosophy at Princeton University, has lectured regularly at Notre Dame since 1948. Regarded as one of the great minds of our day, he is a pre-eminent interpreter of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. He is the author of more than fifty philosophical works, and he has contributed countless articles to the leading philosophical journals of the world. His latest book, Reflections on America, is a non-technical work which has received high praise from American critics for its remarkably acute and sympathetic insights into American life. He is currently working on a two volume study in moral philosophy.

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In addition to his long associations with Notre Dame and Princeton, Maritain has also taught at the Catholic Institute of Paris, the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, Columbia University, and the Committee on Social Thought in the University of Chicago. From 1945 to 1948 he was French ambassador to the Vatican. He also served as president of the French delegation to the second international conference of UNESCO at Mexico City in November, 1947. His inaugural address on that occasion on "The Possibilities for Cooperation in a Divided World" is one of his most influential contributions to social and political philosophy.

Maritain's first book, La Philosophie Bergsonienne, was published in Paris in 1914. Among his major works are The Degrees of Knowledge, A Preface to Metaphysics, Existence and the Existent, Science and Wisdom, Art and Scholasticism, Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry, True Humanism, The Person and the Common Good, Man and the State, and On the Philosophy of History.

Professor Evans and his associates at Notre Dame believe that Maritain has much to give to the modern world. They see him as having to a pre-eminent degree what contemporary man, for all his grandeur, seems to be sadly lacking -- the sense of being and the sense of love. Maritain, they feel, is a man "so admirably attentive to the real, a man who goes beyond phenomena and signs, a man who really comes to grips with the deepest dimensions of things, a man who distinguishes in order to unite, in short, a man who really sees." There is in Maritain, Professor Evans says, "a rich and far-flung mine of challenging insights, illuminating distinctions, and strikingly new avenues of thought. The Maritain Center," he explains, "will strive to put special emphasis on the study of these new philosophical ideas. Any living and creative thought, no matter how well formed and articulated its expression may be, has need ceaselessly to grow. We would like to think that our humble efforts will assist Jacques Maritain's thought to take root and grow in many minds of this and future generations."

But the men associated with the new Maritain Center would also endeavor to learn, and to have others learn, from Maritain's "profound sense of love." This sense of love, they say, has touched and stirred people in every walk of life. What, they ask, are the sources of such a love? What are its implications for intellectual life itself, for social and political life? What can we learn from such an "apostle of love?" What can we learn from a man who wrote, in his well known Letter to Jean Cocteau:

"Our business is to find the positive in all things; to use what is true less to strike than to cure. There is so little love in the world; men's hearts are so cold, so frozen, even in people who are right -- the only ones who could help the others. One must have a hard mind and a meek heart. Not counting soft minds with dry hearts, the world is almost entirely made up of hard minds with dry hearts and meek hearts with soft minds."

What have we in a pluralist America to learn, what have the different peoples of an incomparably more pluralist world to learn from a man who wrote in his recent Truth and Human Fellowship:

"... it happens that we are men, each containing within himself the ontological mystery of personality and freedom: and it is in this very mystery of freedom and personality that genuine tolerance or fellowship takes root. For the basis of good fellowship among men of different creeds is not of the order of the intellect and of ideas, but of the heart and of love. It is friendship, natural friendship, but first and foremost mutual love in God and for God. Love does not go out to essences nor to qualities nor to ideas, but to persons; and it is the mystery of persons and of the divine presence within them which is here in play. This fellowship, then, is not a fellowship of beliefs but the fellowship of men who believe."