

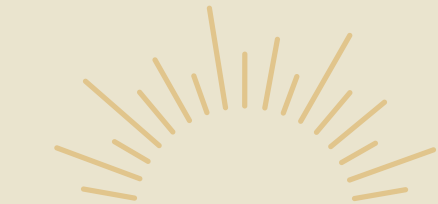


MARITAIN
CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

ANNUAL REPORT

2025/2026





“What we need
is not truths that
serve us but a truth
we may serve.”

— Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*

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Director Therese Cory <i>John and Jean Oesterle Associate Professor of Thomistic Studies</i>	History of Philosophy Forum Steering Committee Gretchen Reydam's-Schils <i>Interim Director, Michael P. Grace II Professor of Liberal Studies</i> Alix Cohen <i>Professor of Philosophy</i> Stephen Ogden <i>Tracey Family Associate Professor of Philosophy</i> Denis Robichaud <i>John and Patrice Kelly Associate Professor of Liberal Studies</i> Andrew Huddleston <i>Professor of Philosophy</i>
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Mission

With Maritain as its model, the Jacques Maritain Center aims to foster deep intellectual conversations and world-class research on the perennial questions of human existence, drawing special inspiration from the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and Maritain's own vision of "integral Christian humanism," but also more broadly from the great traditions of human reasoning in conversation with faith.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

DEAR FRIENDS,



Ralph McInerny, Director of the Center from 1979-2005, once wrote, “Faith is the best thing that ever happened to the human intellect. It is the bulwark of reason, the abiding conviction that there is truth and that it can be grasped by the human mind.” The Maritain Center, the oldest center on campus, has a long legacy of engaging the world with the faithful and philosophical inquiry that McInerny describes. Over the past three years as director, it has been a joy to see the many new arenas into which the Maritain Center has carried its distinctive mission as a beacon of Catholic philosophy at Notre Dame.

As we have initiated new ventures in 2025-2026, we have found the community on campus and abroad as hungry as ever for “a truth we may serve,” as Maritain says. Notre Dame students are enthusiastic for opportunities to discuss important philosophical and practical problems in light of faith, whether with one another, or with professors in informal settings outside the classroom. Similarly, scholars are eager to collaborate and share the academic life—both with the host of teachers and researchers already scattered across the campus, and with colleagues from around the world. What a privilege to be able to create spaces for such conversations to flourish!

The 2025/2026 academic year saw precipitous growth in our student- and scholar-facing programs. Our weekly philosophy seminar expanded by 50% and spawned a sister initiative, the Maritain Theology Forum. Our Student Fellows program has doubled, and we continue to host regular lectures, conferences, and workshops on campus. The largest event of the year was our Third Annual Maritain Lecture, delivered by Bishop Robert Barron in March. The Bishop’s lecture, “An Old Testament Theology of God,” seamlessly integrated insights from the Catholic and broader philosophical tradition in a profound meditation on the biblical God, considering passages from Genesis, Isaiah, Job, and others. The Bishop’s wide-ranging insights edified more than 600 members of the Notre Dame and greater Michiana community, and has been viewed more than 26,000 times online. You can watch the recording of this event and others on our website, and you can read about them in the following pages.

With so much enthusiasm at Notre Dame and beyond for deep discussions of the philosophical and theological topics at the heart of the Catholic intellectual tradition, imagine the possibilities for expanding these conversations at Notre Dame and beyond!

Therese Cory

THERESE CORY
Director of the Maritain Center
John and Jean Oesterle Associate Professor of Thomistic Studies



Through its various fellowship programs, the Maritain Center supports philosophical, theological, and humanistic inquiry advancing the Catholic intellectual tradition and public life. Our fellows range from undergraduate students to early-career and senior scholars. Our fellows constitute a core part of the Center's community and contribute to important conversations taking place on Notre Dame's campus and in the broader academy.



RALPH MCINERNY DISTINGUISHED RESEARCH FELLOW

The Ralph McInerny Distinguished Fellow is an eminent scholar who has made exceptional contributions in the areas of our research priorities. Recipients are selected by invitation only and conduct research in residence at Notre Dame.



Fr. Kevin Flannery, SJ

Professor of the History of Ancient Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University

Professor Emeritus of the History of Ancient Philosophy at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Fr. Kevin L. Flannery, S.J. serves as a consultor of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. He works on the ethics of Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle, with a special emphasis on action theory, as well as ancient logic. His main publications include *Action and Character According to Aristotle: The Logic of the Moral Life* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2013) and *Cooperation with Evil: Thomistic Tools of Analysis* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2019). Fr. Flannery maintains a five-year appointment in this fellowship, conducting research on Notre Dame's campus each spring from 2023 to 2027.

MICHAEL NOVAK AND KAREN LAUB-NOVAK FELLOWSHIP IN PHILOSOPHY AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Michael Novak and Karen Laub-Novak Fellowship in Philosophy and Public Policy is named after Michael Novak, a philosopher, theologian, and political theorist, and Karen Laub-Novak, a prolific artist. The fellowship supports doctoral students pursuing research on questions of public significance.

Evelyn Behling

Evelyn Behling is a doctoral candidate in Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, with past and present affiliations with the de Nicola Center, Nanovic Institute for European Studies, and the Center for Citizenship and Constitutional Government. Her research brings ancient perspectives to bear on social challenges in liberal democracies, especially in the American case. Her dissertation is titled, "Aristotle's Realist Aims: On Faction, Reciprocal Equality, and the Common Advantage in Aristotle's Politics."

Laub-Novak Fellows Panel

This spring, the past two cohorts of Laub-Novak fellows convened for a panel discussion, moderated by Prof. Daniel Philpott (Professor of Political Science, University of Notre Dame). The panelists, Evelyn Behling (Political Science), Catherine Lemos (Theology), and Tyler Castle (Political Science; Associate Director of the Center for Citizenship & Constitutional Government), discussed a range of topics at the intersection of political science, philosophy, and theology, often bringing these topics to bear on live questions in the public square.

MARITAIN FELLOWS

The Maritain Fellows program was launched in fall 2024 to provide fellowship and intellectual formation for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Notre Dame, Saint Mary’s College, and Holy Cross College. Since then, it has grown to include 70 student fellows. Fellows come together to closely study and discuss fundamental questions in philosophy and related disciplines, particularly as informed by the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain’s vision of “integral Christian humanism.”

The Maritain Fellows have the opportunity to invite leading scholars to campus for lectures and personal engagement through dinners, workshops, and seminars. Furthermore, the Maritain Fellows provide forums for discussion among students and faculty about key philosophical questions, facilitated both through formal academic events and informal social gatherings.

Meet the Maritain Fellow Presidents



Arjun Wasan, *President of Undergraduate Maritain Fellows*
B.A., class of 2026, philosophy major with German minor

What inspired you to serve as founding president the undergraduate Maritain Fellows?

I felt that there was a great gap in providing in-depth philosophical and other intellectual formation in the Catholic tradition to Notre Dame undergraduates, and the Jacques Maritain Center seemed to be the best fit for starting something new to fill this gap.

What questions in philosophy do you find yourself returning to?

I am most interested in questions of aesthetics. I have an extensive background in classical music, and I bring much of this to my interest in philosophy. I enjoy the works of the ancients, especially Plato, on these issues, but also later thinkers like Winckelmann, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and von Hildebrand. Finally, I am very interested in the work of the lesser known Colombian philosopher Nicolás Gómez Dávila, and find that his thought encompasses the work of so many other thinkers in compact form.



Alexa Kawlewski, *President of Graduate Maritain Fellows, J.D. Candidate, 2026*

What inspired you to serve as founding president the graduate Maritain Fellows?

I wanted to continue engaging with my liberal arts education and interest in philosophy and ethics while I pursue a degree in law. Legal education, and very specialized graduate education in the liberal arts, often requires students to intensely study one area without considering the whole picture. The Maritain Fellows take students back to the whole picture, to the roots of western and Christian thought.

What has been the highlight of the program for you so far?

For me, the highlight of the program is the intellectual life of the community. I particularly appreciated our Maritain reading group, led by Professor MacArt, we studied works by Charles De Koninck and Jacques Maritain on the concept of the common good. We asked why and how these debates are important for our modern society on a level that I had not explored before.

Supporting Maritain Fellows' Research



Nicholas Ramirez, *PhD Student in Moral Theology*

The Maritain Center supported Nicholas Ramirez's presentation at a conference on Thomas Aquinas, "To Heaven or Hell We Go: Political Implications of a Thomistic Thesis on Nature and Grace after the Fall," at Ave Maria University. Reflecting on the experience, Nicholas wrote, “Whether Christians can have the acquired virtues has been a much debated topic in the recent academic literature, and since last semester I have been very interested and have done much research into habitus in the Thomistic tradition. The papers at this conference and the conversations that followed gave me much encouragement in one of my other research interests which I am considering working on for my doctoral dissertation.



Michael Caplan, *J.D. Candidate, 2026*

During the Spring of 2026 the Maritain Center also supported Michael Caplan (J.D. Candidate, 2026) as he attended the Federalist Society’s National Student Symposium at the Arizona State University College of Law. Highlights of the trip included a personal conversation with the Attorney General of Florida, James Uthmeier, who gave Michael insight into pursuing a career in law and public policy after some time in private practice. Michael also enjoyed hearing a panel on a variety of issues related to natural rights and bodily autonomy, and particularly appreciated that Professor Hadley Arkes, a renowned champion of natural law, emphasized that the issues at hand were not only legal, but also moral questions.

Discussion and Reading Groups



Jacques Maritain, *The Primacy of the Spiritual*

This reading group, organized by Nicholas Ramirez (PhD student, Moral Theology) and sponsored by the Center, worked through Jacques Maritain’s classic book, *The Primacy of the Spiritual*. In the group, undergraduate students joined graduate students in Law, Theology, and Political Theory to consider the Church’s indirect power in the temporal order. This power, according to Maritain, explains Pope Pius XI’s decision to demand that Catholics disassociate from the integralist *Action Française* on pain of excommunication, as well as a host of additional contemporaneous issues—many of which reflect perennial problems in Church-State relations. The reading group included a visit from special guest, Prof. Matthew Miner (Philosophy and Moral Theology Byzantine Catholic Seminary of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Pittsburgh, PA), the Secretary and Webmaster of the American Maritain Association.



Cercle d’études with Prof. Jean Porter, the Maritain Center’s first sponsored course and regular student discussion group.

During both the Fall and Spring semesters, the Maritain Center hosted the Cercle d’études. The Cercle is both a for-credit class and a discussion seminar, open to all members of the tri-campus community. Modelled after Maritain’s discussion circles, the Cercle’s weekly meetings saw students, faculty, and staff from throughout the area—with one attendee traveling all the way from Grand Rapids, MI—gather to discuss questions related to faith, philosophy, and public life. Each meeting was hosted by Jean Porter, Professor Emeritus in the Theology department, and a guest professor from Notre Dame. Read more about the Cercle on the Center’s website, and in the following pages of this report.

CERCLE D'ÉTUDES: THE MARITAIN CENTER'S
FIRST SPONSORED CLASS

During the 2025/26 academic year, the Maritain Center launched its first class, Cercle d'études. Inspired by Jacques Maritain's study circles and hosted by Jean Porter (Professor Emeritus, Theology), the new program advanced the Center's mission to cultivate students' spiritual and intellectual formation in the Catholic tradition throughout the tri-campus community, and beyond.

While the Maritain Center hosts world-leading visiting researchers, organizes and convenes major conferences, and publishes scholarly writings on Maritain and Thomism, its heart is for the intellectual and spiritual formation of students within the Catholic tradition. Last year, the Center advanced that mission by founding the Maritain Student Fellows program, with Graduate and Undergraduate chapters and its flagship Maritain Fellows Lecture Series. While that series continues to be vital to the program's mission, we at the Center felt that an additional piece was needed—one that provided more intimate and extended opportunities for students to think through major questions related to faith, philosophy, and public life.

Enter the Maritain Center's first sponsored course, Cercle d'études. Inspired by Jacques Maritain's famous "study circles," this discussion-based course began meeting regularly in Fall 2025 and continued in the Spring 2026 semester. Each week, a guest professor from the University of Notre Dame visited the class to give a short presentation on a topic re-

lated to the Catholic tradition and contemporary Catholic thought. Often, the weekly topic responded to questions or areas of interest that students raised in the first meeting of the semester. Each week's presentation served as the starting point for an extended period of discussion, often lasting as long as an hour. In this portion of the class, guided by the course's regular moderator, Prof. Jean Porter, students had the opportunity to think-through pressing issues in conversation with world-leading experts.

Open to enrolled students, as well as students, faculty, staff, and visitors who attended as they were able, the first semester saw students and attendees coming from as far as Grand Rapids crowd into the Maritain Library on a regular basis. Demonstrating the vibrant interest in the Catholic tradition at Notre Dame, the course continued to thrive in its second semester, when the course filled to capacity before the first week of classes. Feedback from students has likewise attested to the vital role the Cercle plays in providing an enclave of community and discussion in the midst of a bustling campus.



Testimonials from Students

"At the Cercle seminars, there was always a hunger and humility for knowledge—there was great and active discussion (so much so that there was a long queue of people waiting to ask questions). Everyone openly shared their thoughts in a communal and respectful atmosphere."

"The Cercle d'études helped me rethink how I approach intense questions."

"Sitting around the table, chatting with professors about complicated questions—it reminded me of a scene in a movie I saw about C.S. Lewis' life. It is how I imagined college would be."

"We often touched on questions of beauty and relationship with the natural world, topics which I don't often engage with in my academic studies but found myself reflecting on more in my personal life because of my time spent in the seminar."

"Prof David Cory on Augustine and why we choose evil was both theologically rich and generated amusing, insightful discussion!"

Topics and Guest Professors at Cercle d'études, 2025/2026

"Does the Liberal State Have a Future?"

Guest: Prof. Paul Weithman (Political Philosophy)

"What Does Human Creativity Contribute to the Natural Environment?"

Guest: Prof. Therese Cory (Philosophy)

"God and the Economy"

Guest: Prof. Kirk Doran (Economics)

"Where is Catholic Education Going?"

Guest: Prof. John Betz (Systematic Theology)

"Evolution and the Problem of Evil"

Guest: Prof. Brian Cutter (Philosophy)

"Is Theology a Speculative or Practical Discipline?"

Guest: Prof. Joshua Lim (History of Christianity)

"What's in it for Me? Augustine on why we choose evil."

Guest: Prof. David Cory (Philosophy)

"Beauty and Ugliness"

Guest: Prof. Mark Roche (German Language and Literature)

"Are there intrinsically evil acts? Anscombe, Truman and the Atomic Bomb"

Guest: Prof. José Torralba (Visiting from University of Navarra, Spain)

"Feminist Theology and Catholic Tradition"

Guest: Prof. Mary Catherine Hilkert (Systematic Theology)

"Is AI Conscious? How would we know? Should we care?"

Prof. Jean Porter (Theology)

"Am I Unjustly Withholding My Excess Possessions from the Needy? Aquinas's Ethical Challenge to Us."

Guest: Prof. Therese Cory (Philosophy)

"Are We in a Crisis of Democracy?"

Guest: Prof. Patrick Deneen (Political Science)

"Natural and International Law"

Guest: Prof. Mary Ellen O'Connell (Law School)

"What is Economic Growth?: A Brief Economic History of the World"

Guest: Prof. Mary Hirschfeld (Business/Theology)

"Toward Rhetorical Virtue: Ethics and the Teaching of Argument"

Guest: Prof. John Duffy (English)

"The Church as Leaven in Society: The Fate of a Maritainian Theme"

Guest: Prof. Gerald McKenny (Moral Theology/Ethics)

"Is humility essential for fruitful liberal learning? If so, how can we acquire it?"

Guest: Prof. Mary Keys (Political Science)

"Are you called to what you are studying?"

Guest: Prof. David Richter (Civil & Environmental Engineering and Earth Sciences)

"Aquinas Goes to Washington: The Order of Love, Immigration, and Civic Obligation"

Prof. Jean Porter (Theology)



SIGNATURE EVENTS

In addition to hosting and co-sponsoring a number of major conferences, the Maritain Center continued its two signature lecture series. The Maritain Fellows continued to invite speakers from around the world to campus to address their questions on matters related to faith, public life, and Catholic philosophy. The Center also hosted Bishop Robert Barron, of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester (Minnesota) and the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, for the Third Annual Maritain Lecture. Through these events we have been able to highlight aspects of Catholic philosophy central to our mission for the wider campus community.



Bishop Robert Barron meets with the Maritain Fellows before his lecture.

THIRD ANNUAL MARITAIN LECTURE

The Maritain Lecture is our flagship annual lecture series, at which a prominent scholar addresses questions core to our mission.



On March 5th, the Thursday before Spring Break, the Maritain Center hosted its third Annual Maritain Lecture. Following the series' inaugural lecture by Margarita Mooney Clayton and last year's address by Eleonore Stump, this year's speaker was Bishop Robert Barron, of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester (Minnesota). Bishop Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and an important voice in the life of the Church, as well as an accomplished scholar and teacher of Scripture, Church History, Theology, and Philosophy.

Bishop Barron delivered his talk, "An Old Testament Theology of God," before approximately 650 spectators, including online viewers and the 600+ who gathered in person at the Leighton Concert Hall in the DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. The Bishop's talk took as its starting point the observation that the historical-critical method that dominates academic biblical interpretation has, for many interpreters, been separated from the theological interpretation of the Old Testament that one finds in the pages of "the great bishop theologians of the ancient Church," such as Irenaeus, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine. Taking his cue from these great exegetes, Bishop Barron proceeded to survey the rich theology of God in the Old Testament - a theology which the Bishop frequently put into conversation with St. Thomas Aquinas and other important thinkers in the history of philosophy and Christian theology. Before the lecture, Bishop Barron met with the Maritain Fellows for a private conversation on wide ranging topics in the life of the academy and Church.

MARITAIN FELLOWS’ LECTURE SERIES



I am My Soul

Richard Swinburne (Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, University of Oxford)

In the first invited lecture of the 2025-2026 edition of the series, Prof. Richard Swinburne visited campus from Oxford. He delivered a lecture titled “I am My Soul,” which argued that the soul is the locus of personal identity, or, as he put it, that “Having my soul is necessary for being me.” This lecture, which drew a record crowd and was featured in *The Irish Rover*, sparked considerable conversation amongst the Fellows and other members of the Notre Dame community.



The Metaphysics of Prayer

Fr. Stephen L. Brock (Professor of Medieval Philosophy at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome; Visiting Professor of Philosophy at the University of Chicago)

Fr. Brock’s lecture considered several questions of both profound philosophical complexity and immediate practical importance. If God is all-knowing and all-good, why ask him for things in prayer? Is it helpful to pray for events in the past? What is the impact of prayerful supplication on the character of the human being? Turning to two great Christian thinkers, C.S. Lewis and St. Thomas Aquinas, Fr. Brock thought through these questions with a crowd of 90+ students, faculty, and visitors who travelled to campus.



Faith and Music

Maestro Manfred Honeck (Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra)

In a special edition of the Maritain Fellows Lecture series, the Maritain Center bussed a group of students to Chicago. There, students interviewed world-famous conductor, Maestro Manfred Honeck, on the relationship between faith and music. Then, students attended a concert conducted by Maestro Honeck himself at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. At the concert, Maestro Honeck performed Mozart’s monumental Requiem and other pieces, giving students to see in-action the combination of faith and music that they had discussed with Maestro Honeck just a couple of hours earlier.



Resurrecting Justice: How Christianity Can Renew Our Political Order

Daniel Philpott (Professor of Political Science, Notre Dame)

The Fellows closed the fall portion of the lecture series with an address from Notre Dame’s own Prof. Daniel Philpott. Prof. Philpott’s lecture observed that for centuries, the dominant concept of justice has been rendering to each their due. Prof. Philpott contends, however, that the Bible suggests a different definition of justice: comprehensive right relationship. This justice affirms what is due, or rights, but also proffers duties that exceed due such as mercy, hospitality, care, forgiveness and reconciliation. Retrieving this justice holds out promise for politics today in matters ranging from the protection of life, to immigration, to healing the wounds of racial injustice.



When Does Life Begin? Thomist versus Dualist Perspectives

Jason T. Eberl (Professor of Philosophy, Director of the Albert Gnaegi Center for Bioethics, Saint Louis University)

To begin the spring 2026 series of Maritain Fellows Lectures, the Fellows invited Prof. Jason T. Eberl to speak on the topic of ensoulment. Prof. Eberl’s lecture canvassed a wide range of historical perspectives on the relationship between the soul and body, as well as embryology in ancient and modern science. Putting Thomistichylomorphism in conversation with modern science, Eberl demonstrated the plausibility of the belief that life begins at conception.



What is Philosophy, Rightly Understood? And Why Does it Matter for Society at Large?

Vittorio Hösle (Paul G. Kimball Professor of Arts and Letters, Notre Dame)

The final Maritain Fellows lecture of the year took place April 29th. It was delivered by beloved Notre Dame professor Vittorio Hösle, and doubled as a send-off before Prof. Hösle moved to the Boston area. More than eighty students and faculty paused their end-of-year activities to attend the lecture, which saw Prof. Hösle draw on his extensive experience in the European university system and 25+ years teaching at Notre Dame to reflect on the nature and purpose of philosophical education.

MARITAIN CENTER EVENTS IN PHOTOS



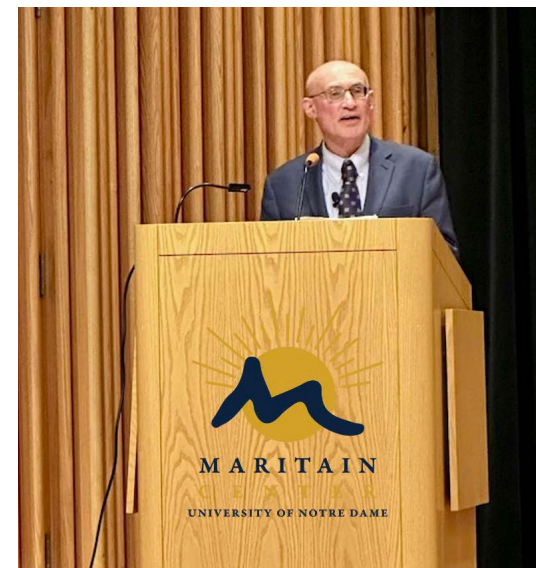
Fellows at Chicago Symphony Orchestra (Fall, 2025)



Prof. Philpott's Maritain Fellows Lecture, "Resurrecting Justice" (Dec. '25)



Fellows interview Maestro Honeck (Nov. '25)



Prof. Höslle's Maritain Fellows Lecture (April '26)



Participants at Ordo amoris workshop (May, '26)



Mass at American Catholic Philosophical Association Annual Meeting (Oct. '25)



Therese Cory speaks on Aquinas Day in Rome (Jan. '26)



Bishop Barron greets students after Maritain Lecture (March, '26)



Alexa moderates Q&A (Feb. '26)



Maritain Fellows in Chicago for "Faith and Music" event (Nov. '25)



Student at Cercle seminar



BRINGING THE WORLD TO JACQUES MARITAIN

This year the Center launched its new Jacques Maritain Center Research Grant program. This new initiative allowed the Center to host a number of international scholars on the campus of Notre Dame. By providing lodging, travel, logistical support, and University access, the new program advanced research topics related to Jacques Maritain, Thomism, and Catholic philosophy. The program also facilitated access to the Center's archival collections, which include the papers of Maritain and others. Below you can meet our grant awardees and other researchers that the Center hosted this year.

Frederico Bonaldo, Brazil

Associate Professor of Ethics, Academia Atlântico / Uningá, Rio de Janeiro
Natural Theism and Virtuous Moral Life in Aquinas: A Necessary or Contingent Relationship?

Noemi Faustini, Italy

PhD Candidate, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome
Kabbalistic Influences on Simone Weil's Concept of Decreated Being

Jon Haines, USA

PhD. Candidate, Center for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas (TX)
Technology and Aristotelian-Thomistic Politics in the Thought of Yves R. Simon

Sean Hannan, Canada

Associate Professor of History, MacEwan University
City of Migrants: Augustine and the Ethics of Migration

Sr. Blandine Lagrut, France

Associate Professor of Philosophy, Facultés Loyola Paris
'Naturally Spiritual' The metaphysical anthropology of Elizabeth Anscombe

José M. Torralba, Spain

Professor of Moral Philosophy, University of Navarra
The configuration of the moral subject in Aquinas. Character, freedom and moral development

MARITAIN THEOLOGY FORUM

The Maritain Theology Forum is a new lunchtime seminar series launched in collaboration with the Theology Department in spring 2026. Modelled after the History of Philosophy Forum's Work-in-Progress series, the seminar fosters dialogue, collaboration, and community across disciplines and departments at Notre Dame. Each seminar sees a student, visitor, or faculty member present a 30 minute paper, which is followed by 30 minutes of discussion. Papers canvas a broad range of topics, all of which engage questions in contemporary Catholic theology.

12	8
PRESENTATIONS IN THE MTF'S INAUGURAL SPRING 2026 SERIES	DISCIPLINES REPRESENTED
	Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity
	Philosophy
	Liturgical Studies
	Systematic Theology
	History
	Church History
	World Religions/World Church
	Moral Theology
24	
ATTENDEES ON AVERAGE	



**MARITAIN
THEOLOGY
FORUM**

"Over the summer, as the result of various conversations, several theology faculty from a range of areas realized we were all interested in having more opportunities for conversation across departmental areas, and also with other departments, especially philosophy. The interest and enthusiasm was so strong and immediate that by the end of the summer, we had resolved to try and see if we could start something as early as Spring 2026. And I'm happy to say, we've been able to pull it off!"

—Fr. Nicholas Lombardo (Theology, ND), on the origins of the Maritain Theology Forum



THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY FORUM

The History of Philosophy Forum is a sponsored initiative of the Jacques Maritain Center. It serves as Notre Dame’s hub for research activity in the history of philosophy, drawing on our exceptionally large research community on campus in interlinked areas including Christian, Jewish, and Muslim intellectual traditions, intellectual history, history of political thought, history of the study of the natural world, and more.



The Three Philosophers by Giorgione

RESEARCH CLUSTERS

Since its inception, the Forum has developed its programming around multi-year research clusters. In addition to supporting the scholarship of students, faculty, and visiting researchers, the Forum hosts flagship events such as annual colloquia, invited lectures, and book workshops which bring eminent scholars to campus.

Modeling the Mind in the History of European Philosophy 2021-2025

This research cluster co-sponsored by the Nanovic Institute for European Studies explores various ways of modeling the mind in the European history of philosophy and its global interlocutors. The concept of “the mind”—modeled as a private inner realm, the locus of thought, choice, and selfhood—is often elevated as a key contribution of European philosophy and associated with modern political conceptions of the individual or self.

Through its annual themes of “Cognizing as Being,” “The Life of the Mind,” and “Minds in Dialogue,” this Research Cluster has showcased alternative models that hold considerable value for philosophical reflection today, but that have been buried under layers of historical sediment in the meantime. As historians of philosophy specializing in different time periods and traditions, we have been especially interested in tracking how certain models recur, overlap, and interact across different historical periods and traditions, thus providing a case study for the transformation of concepts through time.

Historical Traditions of Ethics 2025-2028

The field-shaping contributions to virtue ethics that have defined Notre Dame’s reputation in ethics have grown out of a deep appreciation of how the historical ethical traditions arising from thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Ibn Sina, Aquinas, Pascal, Kant, Confucius, and many others, continue to define our thinking about moral issues today. In a world plagued by increasing social isolation, it is more urgent than ever to reconnect with longstanding traditions of reason that can not only foster a sense of historical “belonging,” but make possible mutual understanding across cultures shaped by those traditions.

Building on Notre Dame’s areas of research excellence in ethics and the history of philosophy and supported by the Office of the Provost’s Strategic Framework Grant program, this research cluster stimulates global collaborations on how major historical thinkers have tackled the most important ethical problems, and how their intellectual contributions have been developed in traditions of inquiry across time. This year’s research theme will be “Emotions and Morality in the History of Philosophy.”

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY FORUM
EVENTS IN PHOTOS

The History of Philosophy Forum regularly co-sponsors and organizes events on campus. On this page are images from the North American Kant Society Midwest meeting, hosted last fall by the History of Philosophy Forum and Prof. Alix Cohen. On the facing page are images from other events from throughout the year.



Prof. Cohen with keynote speaker Prof. Allen Wood



Postdoc Chris Benzenberg and visiting fellow Karin Nisenbaum speak with other attendees during a break



Attendees listen to the keynote address



Panelists reflect on the legacy of Prof. Karl Ameriks, acclaimed professor of philosophy at Notre Dame who passed away in 2025



Forum Fellow Ernesto at Forum event



The Forum's annual spring colloquium



Co-sponsored workshop on Aristotle's De somno in Mexico City (April 2026)



Prof. Cai at Emotions and Morality in Eastern Philosophy Workshop



"Highest Good" workshop (March '26)

FORUM FELLOW INTERVIEWS

Two of our 2025/26 Fellows, jointly sponsored Faculty Fellow Karin Nisenbaum and Postdoctoral Fellow Christopher Benzenberg, kindly spoke about their work with the Maritain Center. For full versions of the following interviews, visit the History of Philosophy Forum's website.



MARITAIN CENTER:What are you researching here at Notre Dame?

CHRISTOPHER BENZENBERG: I mostly work on Kant. Currently, I am focusing on his account of knowledge and faith. Kant famously claims that he had to deny *knowledge* about certain questions in metaphysics—for example about God’s existence—in order to make room for faith. This raises deeper questions. What, for Kant, are knowledge and faith? How are they justified? To what extent are they under our control? And what kinds of claims do they make on others?

MC: So, according to Kant, what claims do knowledge and faith make on others?

CB: Kant draws a striking contrast between knowledge and faith. Knowledge, he argues, rests on what he calls “objective grounds.” By “objective grounds,” he means considerations that are, in principle, binding on any rational agent. When such grounds are made fully explicit by, for example, a rigorous proof, they do not merely persuade; they compel assent. In this sense, knowledge belongs to the public sphere. It is something we can demand of one another as members of a shared community of reasoners.

Faith, by contrast, rests on “subjective grounds.” These can still make our assent rational, but only relative to a subject’s own practical or moral standpoint. As a result, subjective grounds cannot legitimately be used to coerce agreement from others. A central feature of Kantian faith, then, is

that it involves a form of free commitment. It is something one rationally takes up rather than something one can be forced into, though this still leaves room for communities of faith to play an important social role.

MC: How do these concepts help us live better lives?

CB: For Kant, drawing the boundary between knowledge and faith is a central task of the Enlightenment. By limiting public knowledge, Kant makes room for private faith. Getting this distinction right has real practical consequences. It helps us structure a society in which claims to knowledge are subject to shared standards of justification, while matters that depend on individual commitment are protected from illegitimate demands for proof. The result is an epistemic division of labor that is both intellectually responsible and respectful of personal freedom. Kant shows how we can disagree deeply without silencing the truth or each other.

MC: How has the community at Notre Dame and the Forum shaped this project?

CB: The distinction between knowledge and faith has a long and complex history, so my project has benefited greatly from the range of perspectives brought together by the History of Philosophy Forum. Being in conversation with scholars of ancient philosophy, medieval thought—especially Aquinas—and the early modern period constantly opens up new angles, and the cross-period dialogue often reveals connections that are unexpected but genuinely illuminating. The Forum also attracts Kant scholars from across the US and beyond. What makes the Forum so valuable, in my experience, is this combination of breadth and focus, which creates a setting in which projects like mine develop through ongoing conversation with others.

MARITAIN CENTER: What are you researching while you're at Notre Dame?

KARIN NISENBAUM: Let me first express my heart-felt gratitude for the opportunity to be part of the thriving intellectual community at Notre Dame’s History of Philosophy Forum and at the Institute for Ethics and the Common Good. This is an ideal environment to work on my second book, which is on the highest good in the Kantian and post-Kantian philosophical traditions (the book will include separate chapters on Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Maimon, Cohen, and Rosenzweig).

MC: Could you please explain the concept of the highest good?

KN: The “highest good” has a history reaching back to the Classical tradition, where it was seen as essential to cultivating virtue and leading a worthwhile life. When Kant discusses the highest good, he distinguishes the highest good understood as the supreme good from the highest good understood as the complete good.

Understood as the supreme good, the highest good is the unconditioned good: it is the only thing that is good without qualification and in all circumstances. On Kant’s view, the only thing that has this unconditioned value is a good will, a will that is governed by the moral law. It is important to note that the good will isn’t the source of all value—there are many things that Kant thinks are good in themselves, such as health, talents, intelligence, love, or friendship—but the good will is that good which is the condition for all other value. In other words, the good will is that good in the absence of which other commonly recognized goods lose the value that they would ordinarily have. For example, if intelligence is used or pursued in a way that is inconsistent with the demands of morality, it loses the value that it is commonly recognized to have. Understood as the complete good, the highest good is virtue together with happiness.

MC: What are your aims in writing this book?

KN: One of my aims in writing this book is to challenge the idea that Kant’s moral theory lacks a notion of value as its fundamental concept (the standard deontological reading). I will argue that Kant’s critical revolution in practical philosophy does not consist in the subordination of all considerations of value to principles of right. Like classical philosophers, Kant believes that the main subject matter of ethics is the nature of the unconditioned good. Another subsidiary aim of the book is to make the case that the highest good should be reinstated as an important theme for contemporary moral philosophy.

MC: Many people are appreciative of the way insights from the history of philosophical ethics can help them lead better lives. How might your particular research be instructive for the way we go about our ethical decision making today?

KN: Questions about the highest good are questions about our highest values. I worry that we are currently trying to conduct many difficult conversations—about the aims of education, about the use of artificial intelligence, about the value of free speech, about immigration, about political violence, about the limits of presidential power—without raising questions about our highest values. We need to ask ourselves whether our highest value should be wealth, or power, or freedom, or moral agency, or perhaps even love. We’ll get very different answers to questions such as “How should we understand the aims of education?” if we think that what matters most is to increase profits, or to respect freedom, or to promote moral development.

It is, of course, very difficult to reach agreement concerning our highest values. But the cost of not trying to do so is simply too high. In this regard, it has been very encouraging to be at Notre Dame, where education is oriented by the values outlined in the University’s mission statement, and where I see people deliberately raising questions about our highest values when discussing a variety of important questions.

VISITING RESEARCHER PROGRAM

The Forum regularly hosts visiting researchers working on topics in the history of philosophy, funding visits through two competitive grants programs and welcoming scholars eager to collaborate with Notre Dame's resesarch community. Below are projects that the Forum supported this past academic year.

- ANDREA ARAF, University of Würzburg**
Self-Intellection in Alexander of Aphrodisias and Plotinus
- MAX BERGAMO, University of Padua / Yale University**
Heraclitus between Greek Philosophy, Christianity, and Islam: Towards an Edition of the Late Antique Testimonies
- ANDREW CHIGNELL, Princeton University**
Kant and the Ethics of Assent
- URI ERAN, Hebrew University of Jerusalem**
"No Punishment May Be Imposed Out of Hatred:" Kant on Punishment and Revenge
- NOEMI FAUSTINI, Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome**
Kabbalistic Influences on Simone Weil's Concept of Decreated Being
- PATRICIO FERNANDEZ, University of Texas at Austin**
Agency in Ancient Philosophy
- GERAD GENTRY, Baylor University**
Kant, Free Lawfulness of the Mind, and Subjective Self-legislation
- FILIP GRGIĆ, Institute of Philosophy (Zagreb)**
Aristotle and Anscombe on Practical Truth
- ANDREY IVANOV, São Paulo State University**
Thomas Aquinas in Later-Medieval Theories of Art
- Yael Kedar, Tel Hai College**
Natural Place, Heaviness and Condensation: Franciscan Interpretations in the Thirteenth Century
- MICHAEL LANG, University of Pittsburgh**
Being and Goodness in Aristotle's Metaphysics

- GIOVANNI LASORELLA, University of Cologne**
John Picard of Lichtenberg and his Quaestiones: Exploring networks between cultural centers through the critical edition and study of medieval philosophical texts
- JORDAN LAVENDER, Texas A&M University**
Life and Consciousness in Ibn Rushd and Peter Auriol: The Changing Meaning of "Vital Act" (actus vitalis) in the Fourteenth Century
- ANDRE MARTIN, Charles University, Prague**
Averroes' Agent Sense in the Early 13th Century: Albert and His Sources
- KARIN NISENBAUM, Syracuse University**
The Highest Good in German Idealism
- CHRISTOPHER ISAAC NOBLE, Syracuse University**
What's so Good about Unity?: Neoplatonists on Oneness and Goodness
- LOREN REINOSO, Yale University**
Together We Rule: Representative Authority and Political Agency
- ELLIE ROBSON, King's College, London**
Aristotle Before Anscombe: A New History of Virtue Ethics
- EMILY THOMAS, Durham University**
Time in Mary Calkins and Arthur Lovejoy
- DAVID TORRIJOS-CASTRILLEJO, Universidad Eclesiástica San Dámaso (Madrid, Spain)**
Transcription, Editing, Translation and Interpretation of Early Spanish Dominican Texts on De Auxiliis Controversy
- PETER WEST, Northeastern University London**
Women at the Dawn of Analytic Philosophy

WORKS-IN-PROGRESS LUNCHEONS

A core way that we support research within the Forum community is through our Works-in-Progress luncheons, where a faculty member, graduate student, or visiting researcher presents a current project and receives feedback from other members in the Forum community. The workshop is designed to give contributors the opportunity to develop ideas and introduce their research to a receptive audience with diverse academic backgrounds.



"The WIP luncheons have been a central part of my academic formation. The Forum has provided me with the chance to present my work to and receive feedback from local and visiting scholars. In addition, I've learned a lot about current research from our impressive group of visiting fellows. This experience has broadened my knowledge of the history of philosophy and strengthened my relationship with colleagues at Notre Dame and abroad."

—Abigail Whalen, Forum Fellow and PhD Student in Philosophy



HISTORY OF THE CENTER

The first visit of the great French Catholic philosopher, Jacques Maritain, to the University of Notre Dame took place in the fall semester of 1938. Subsequently, Maritain became one of the many European intellectuals who took refuge in the United States during the upheaval of World War II.



At the founding of the Jacques Maritain Center in 1958. Left to right: Victor Schaefer, librarian emeritus; Joseph W. Evans, founder and inaugural director; Jacques Maritain; Rev. Herman Reith, C.S.C., associate professor emeritus of philosophy; Frank Keegan, former assistant dean of College of Arts & Letters and former associate professor in the Program of Liberal Studies.

Jacques Maritain
Center Directors

JOSEPH W. EVANS
1958–1979

RALPH MCINERNY
1979–2005

JOHN O’CALLAGHAN
2005–2023

THERESE CORY
2023–present

“During his long tenure as director of the Maritain Center, Joe labored to make Maritain known to English readers by way of a large number of translations, among them Integral Humanism, The Grace and Humanity of Jesus, and God and the Permission of Evil. At the same time, Joe introduced class after class of undergraduates to the thought of Maritain.”

— Ralph McInerny, Professor of Philosophy
Maritain Center Director, 1979–2005

Amidst appointments at various American and Canadian institutions from 1940 to 1944, Maritain frequently came to the University of Notre Dame, where his student Yves R. Simon was already on the philosophy faculty. During his visits Maritain would lecture and meet with colleagues such as Rev. Gerald B. Phelan, who had known Maritain at the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto and moved to Notre Dame as the inaugural director of the Medieval Institute in 1946. From these visits blossomed Maritain’s long-standing relationship with Notre Dame, which even involved Maritain’s being consulted on the core curriculum. Eventually, this relationship culminated in the founding of the Jacques Maritain Center on September 25, 1958, with the aim of ensuring that Maritain’s thought and spirit would remain active at Notre Dame.

The Center was founded by Notre Dame philosophy professor Joseph W. Evans in collaboration with his colleagues Frank Keegan and Fr. Leo R. Ward, and received great encouragement from Fr. Theodore M. Hesburgh, himself an admirer of Maritain. In the press release for the Center’s founding, Evans praised Maritain as someone who is “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,” but also someone who expresses a “profound sense of love” that has “touched and stirred people in every walk of life.” Evans directed the Center from 1958 until his death in 1979, focusing his activities on the twin occupations of translating works of Maritain into English and teaching thousands of students. The indelible personal impression that Evans made on his students was a living tribute to the impact that the thought and life of Maritain had on him.

Under the leadership of Ralph McInerny, director from 1979–2005, the Maritain Center grew to become a widely respected center for Thomistic studies at Notre Dame, collecting and preserving books, dissertations, and archival materials to facilitate re-



Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame, and Ralph McInerny, director of the Jacques Maritain Center, stand beside a bust of Jacques Maritain in 1987. McInerny named Hesburgh the honorary editor of the English edition of the Collected Works of Jacques Maritain.

"For twenty-seven years as director of the Maritain Center Ralph McInerny provided a locale for intellectual discussion among graduate and undergraduate students alike. Despite his very busy schedule of writing, teaching, and speaking, he was always willing to drop it all and spend hours talking philosophy in his office if one had a question or two or three."

— **John O'Callaghan**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Maritain Center Director, 2005-2023

search into the thought of Maritain and promote the neo-Thomistic revival—material that grew to become the collections that the Center proudly houses today. During this time, the Center held regular weeklong summer schools or “Thomistic Institutes,” bringing together leading Catholic Thomistic

scholars and junior scholars. Other activities included a Thomistic reading group and the “Thomas Aquinas Society” for undergraduates, as well as meetings devoted to the thought of Maritain, in conjunction with the Institut International Jacques Maritain and the American Maritain Association.

From 2005-2023, John O'Callaghan took up the reins of the Center. Under his leadership, the Center expanded its international profile, welcoming scholars from Kenya, Argentina, Italy, France, Mexico, Spain, Chile, Switzerland, China, Venezuela, who came to work with the Center's collections for periods varying from a week to a year. The Center also collaborated regularly with the Pontifical Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome) and the Symposium Thomisticum (a major conference held each summer in a different European country). In 2022, a “virtual colloqui-

"Under John O'Callaghan's leadership, scholars from around the world travelled to Notre Dame to study and conduct research in the Maritain Center's extensive library and archive, advancing scholarship and exchange in Thomistic and medieval philosophy and cementing Notre Dame's place as one of the preeminent universities for serious research in the Thomist tradition."

— **O. Carter Snead**, Charles E. Rice Professor of Law



Prof. John O'Callaghan delivering remarks on July 21, 2023.



Prof. Therese Cory convening the Aquinas at 800: “ad multos annos,” which the Maritain Center organized and hosted on Notre Dame's campus, Sept. 22-25, 2024.

um” on Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law that the Center sponsored, together with the Angelicum's Thomistic Institute and the Notre Dame Beijing Global Gateway, drew over a thousand participants.

The Maritain Center, originally located in Bond Hall, moved to the seventh floor of the newly constructed Hesburgh Library in 1963. There it remained, adjoining the Medieval Institute, until 2011, when O'Callaghan oversaw the move to its new quarters on the fourth floor of Geddes Hall, where it remains located today.

Since 2023, the Center has been directed by Therese Cory, John and Jean Oesterle Associate Professor of Thomistic Studies, working with a team of talented and dedicated faculty and staff. Under her leadership, the Maritain Center has begun sponsoring the History of Philosophy Forum in order to promote the study of the world's great traditions of human reasoning, and the wisdom they continue to offer us today. Prof. Cory's early tenure has been marked with the hosting of the Aquinas at 800 conference, the establishment of the annual Maritain Lecture, and the roll-out of the Maritain Fellows program, in addition to various stand-alone events and international collaborations as seen in, for example, the new Jacques Maritain Center Research Grant program.



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