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Recollections of Three Thinkers: Adler, Simon, and Maritain

In my mind's eye, M.J. Adler stands forth as the Demonstrator and Remonstrator of our time, Y.R. Simon as the Argumentor and Distinguisher of our period, and Jacques Maritain as the Synthesizer and Prophetic Voice of our age.

In this presentation, I view Adler, Simon, and Maritain from the perspective of personal recollections moving back in time to the 1930s and 1940s and in terms of the impact they exercised on young teachers and students in that period. It is then obviously not a philosophical evaluation, even though I recognize that recall involves selection and a sort of implicit evaluation.

I refer to these thinkers by their last names, not out of disrespect but out of regard for their stature and status among the Great Ones. One does not denominate Hegel as Professor Hegel but quite simply as Hegel because he is one of the Great. Let me proceed to a conspectus of each of three philosophers and then to my concluding remarks.

I. Mortimer J. Adler

I did not have the privilege of knowing Adler as colleague or friend. I did enjoy several meetings with him, especially in the 1940s, usually in a group situation. In Saint Louis and other cities, he delivered lectures I attended. His books and articles, which were published in a regular and rapid rate and which I read avidly, exerted a lasting influence upon me. The first lecture by Adler I ever attended I recall vividly. It was given in 1938 at a Catholic women's college in Saint Louis. He contended, in a theme developed at length in his *How to Read a Book*, that, in an exacting sense of reading, few people including scholars ever read a book, even those who devour hundreds of tomes. It was above all in the middle ages that the mental atmosphere was conducive to thorough reading. Few ancients and hardly any moderns have really *read* a book. The medievals did read books.

The exceptions to Adler's rule fortify his thesis. The Cistercians of the Strict Observance, the Trappists as they came to be called from the monastery *La Trappe* in Normandy, were in Rancé's day allowed only one or two books for pondering and digesting during the Lenten season. Abraham Lincoln, from what we know of his youth with little formal schooling, had only a few books at his disposal. These he mastered along with the language he spoke so eloquently. The tradition of *Lectio Divina* in European monasteries scattered far and wide from the patristic era to the middle ages and continuing into modern times promoted *reflective reading* (which is in reality Adler's "reading"; after all, one does not really read if reflection is lacking) of every work handled.

At the present time, it surprises me to realize that Adler was in his late thirties in 1938. To me in my early twenties, he seemed mature and knowledgeable.

In those days, there was much talk about Catholics being in a ghetto and having a ghetto mentality. (The English Catholic writer Wilfrid Ward spoke of Catholics beginning to emerge from their "siege mentality.") The ghetto notion, wrenched out of its original context, has always seemed somewhat ambiguous to me and so I hesitate even to refer to it here. At the risk of digression, let me point out that in the 1930s and 1940s when I was studying and teaching at Catholic universities in the Middle West of our country, there was, at least as I recall the situation, little or no mention of Catholics being confined to ghettos. (Of course, I say half-seriously that one may be so immured in a ghetto that one does not even realize it!) It was only when I was teaching at Boston College in the 1960s that I heard talk about Catholics in the ghetto. Perhaps in that environment, they had been in or were just breaking out of one. Some Irish-Americans, Irish in a distinctively Bostonian style, had received higher education at Ivy League schools and were inclined to disparage the basic values of their culture as well as its narrownesses.

On the one hand, there was in the 1930s to the 1950s (at least) a certain narrowmindedness, a defensive mentality inherited from immigrant forebears who huddled together for protection and guidance. On the other hand, Catholic intellectuals were making contact with their great traditions going all the way back to the middle ages, expanding their horizons, and were thus less provincial than many of their secularist contemporaries.

This seeming digression serves some purpose if it helps us the better to understand the value and the impact of Adler's writings and speeches in the period of which I speak. The scholar who had come from the secularistic world, who repudiated it, and who now championed the Great Tradition that we Catholics were beginning to assimilate and appreciate, was a

friend in a time of need.

In *Philosopher at Large*, his autobiographical work, Adler acknowledges that he was sometimes too brusque and brash in his criticisms of the "moderns." In "God and the Professors," a piece he wrote around 1940, he argues that the most serious threat to democracy is the *positivism* of the Professors, the central corruption of modern culture. Democracy has more to fear from the mentality of its teachers than from the nihilism of Hitler. (All this at a time when the hordes of Hitler were conquering Europe and terrifying the peoples of the world.) Adler's logic in these accusations was perhaps irrefutable but his rhetoric (as he admits) was not calculated to influence the people he intended to persuade. Of course, it is arguable that Adler's procedure was necessary at the time, and was aimed at shocking those entrenched in their own secularist ghetto into sanity.

One is reminded of Maritain, shortly after his conversion to Catholicism, writing *Antimoderne* (in the book itself he says it should perhaps have been entitled *Ultramoderne*). It is one of the finest books written by the youthful convert. It contains a scathing denunciation of modern trends as well as a recognition of values brought to light in this time.

In retaliation for his attacks upon the Professorial Estate, some critics called Adler a "dialectical typewriter," a species of heartless logic-machine. Even some Catholics began to be critical of Adler. They were irritated at his criticism of Catholic mediocrity and of the failure of Catholics to appreciate their own priceless tradition. Some persons could not understand why he did not become a Catholic. It was reported that a religious sister who questioned him on this matter was given the simple answer, "I have not received the Gift of Faith!" There was admittedly something paradoxical about a man who accepted much of Aquinas' theology as well as his philosophy and did not go further. (It should be mentioned that Adler himself treats this sensitive topic in *Philosopher at Large*.)

Adler would readily acknowledge that he was more interested in human thought than in human beings. At the same time, his capacity for friendship presents us with another paradox about his personality. On the occasion of his sixtieth birthday (a time much later than that to which we devote attention here), the roster of those who paid tribute to him reads like a roll-call of the leaders in the gallant fight for the Great Tradition. Buchanan, McKeon, Barzun, Fadiman, the Van Dorens, Rubin, Mayer, and many others: these persons he calls *friends*.

Pride of place is reserved for his friendship with Jacques Maritain. Over and over in his writings and early and late in his career, he refers to Maritain as his close personal friend. In *What Man Has Made of Man* (1937), he praises *The Degrees of Knowledge* (1932) as constituting "the outlines, at least, of a synthesis of science, philosophy and theology which will do for

us what St. Thomas did for philosophy and theology in the middle ages." In *Philosopher at Large* (1977), Adler praises Maritain and conjoins him with Aristotle and Aquinas as the ones from whom he has learned the most and as those who are the great champions of living Tradition.

Adler the arch-intellectual does not disdain the common man. On the contrary, he esteems him. In his later period, one of his books is entitled *Aristotle for Everybody* and he says it is intended for the Professors. It should be emphasized that one of the distinctive insights of Adler resides in his respect for and his appeal to the judgment of the common man. He maintains that the so-called "common man" is able to grasp basic truths (for example, certain of the Great Ideas, especially those in the moral order). The "common man," an appellation often used and much abused, is in the final analysis the "uncommon man." It seems to me that, in this view, Adler in his own way is at one with Pope John Paul II, who names each human person "this unique individual," and with Jacques Maritain, who refers early and late to the basic dignity of each person. (In a somewhat special reference bearing on the same theme, Yves Simon argues that intellectuals and landed proprietors should not have more than one vote, but one the same as every other individual. Simon argues this way *because he trusts the good judgment of the average citizen.*)

Furthermore, I find an affinity between Adler's perspective on the uncommon common man and Maritain's idea in his educational philosophy that emphasis should be placed in liberal education (from high school years and the following, or from what in many countries are called the *lycee* or *college* years) upon what he terms *natural intelligence*. Only later on does the student, with his intelligence fortified by intellectual virtue, tackle advanced stages of knowledge. It should be noted that Maritain emphasizes the importance of educating the "natural intelligence" and at the same time devotes attention to advanced students, who are led to develop the *habitus* of philosophy for themselves by way of a more formal and rigorous discipline. In my view, while he makes perceptive observations on *habitus* in *What Man Has Made of Man*, Adler does not bring out these distinctions as clearly as does Maritain.

At this point, I should mention the influence that the reading of Adler had upon me in the 1940s and 1950s. Every book and article Adler put forth was an event for me. Of his plentiful writings, of which I still retain records and jottings from the text, I take as example a book already mentioned, *What Man Has Made of Man*. This important study of philosophical and empiriological psychology as well as of psychoanalysis I read over and over and found it (as I still do) of exceptional value in my teaching of what was then termed "Rational Psychology" and later "Philosophical Psychology" or "Anthropology." The book was presented in outline form,

which threw some people off, but even in that shape I regarded it as immensely serviceable.

In this period, Adler co-authored with Father Walter Farrell, O.P., a study of democracy. Well thought out and closely reasoned, it nevertheless became a subject of controversy. In fact, I disagreed with some aspects of the authors' thesis and published a critique of it. I hasten to add that one does not lightly disagree with Dr. Adler. One hesitates to engage in disputation with the Great Disputant. One needs the argumentative skill of a Simon and the insight of a Maritain to fare well in any such encounter.

Yet, when all is said and done, Adler welcomes debate. In his *Idea of Freedom* (vol. II), he praises *rational debate*. His complaint is that there is so little of the rational in the interminable arguments about philosophical and related issues. In medieval times, he points out, the Schoolmen in their disputations and other intellectual jousts afford an example of truly rational debate. Most moderns, including some classed as great thinkers, lunge past each other and assail strawmen.

An unfortunate example of a debate lacking rationality was supplied on the occasion of Adler's study on *The Problem of Species*. An uncalled-for attack was launched on the work by Professor B.J. Muller-Thym of Saint Louis University. He was my thesis mentor at the university and I held him in esteem. In his critique, he not only countered Adler's thesis but questioned his scholarship and competence. I can never forget how Maritain rebuked Muller-Thym and, though he did not agree altogether with Adler's ideas, defended him against what he considered outrageous charges.

I trust I have provided some understanding of what Adler meant for young scholars at the time of which I speak. In a period when Catholic colleges were laboring under material handicaps and certain intellectual disadvantages, the example and inspiration of Adler were heartening. Even when one did not agree with every particular proposition he maintained, his dedication to defending his position was conducive to our appreciating all the more our own traditions.

For those reasons, I consider Mortimer Adler one of the outstanding teachers of our time. I call him the Demonstrator and Remonstrator. Even at my present age, I regard Adler not as venerable but as surprisingly active and thought-provocative for a man of his years.

II. Yves R. Simon

Yves Simon I regarded as a respected senior colleague and cherished friend. It is not an easy task to speak of him in brief. Here I wish to present recollections of and observations about his lectures, his writings, and the books that influenced me, and reflections about his significance as a Chris-

tian philosopher, particularly for the period of the 1940s and 1950s.

Vivid in my recollection is the very first lecture I heard Simon deliver, the annual Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University on March 3, 1940. It was entitled *Nature and Functions of Authority*. Vivid in my recollection is the voice of Simon intoning bell-like, "Freedom is the splendor of being."

In subsequent years, I heard him lecture on a number of occasions at Marquette University and at various professional meetings and gatherings and at the University of Chicago, where he taught in the Committee on Social Thought from 1948 to 1961. The most memorable and profitable occasion for me was 1946, at which time Simon gave a summer graduate course, "The Critique of Scientific Knowledge," at Marquette University. (From 1938 to 1948 he was Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.) I recall that in the 1950s I arranged a reception for and a lecture by him on his recently published book, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* at the Cardijn Center for Catholic Action in Milwaukee.

In his lecturing and writing, Simon displayed an excellent command of the English language, one he learned not in his youthful but in more mature years. I recall reflecting at the time that his prose was not part-colored, as it often is even in expository writing in our tongue, but rather argentiferous. When he spoke, there was a slight French accentuation to his tone, but he spoke English fluently and idiomatically. Sometimes he would even politely correct native English speakers on subtle points of grammar.

On the visits he would make to Milwaukee from time to time (usually for lectures), our acquaintanceship developed into friendship. On occasion, he would stay at our home, and I recall his saying that the apartment we lived in near the university reminded him of one in which he and his family had lived in Lille. A correspondence between us developed as time went on; his letters to me are brief but pithy, full of interest in my activities and full of thoughtfulness.

Vivid in my recollection above other recollections is my last visit to Yves at his home in South Bend, Indiana, not long before he passed away. He never spoke to me about his illness, but we knew without speaking that this was most probably the last time we would see each other. I knew from my friend, Father Leo Ward, C.S.C., of the University of Notre Dame, as well as from other friends, about the religious spirit and the courage with which Yves accepted his suffering. Despite a certain somberness, the visit was, as sometimes such occasions are, a companionable and pleasant one. His sister Therese from his native city of Cherbourg was there, and I can still hear in my memory's eye (or ear!) her beautiful French ringing out like the chimes of a bell.

I turn now to the influence the books, studies, and lectures of Simon

had upon me in the 1940s and 1950s. As I have said, I am not providing an evaluation here, but confine myself to expressing how much I benefitted and derived from these works.

It is somewhat difficult to characterize the difference between the influence of Simon upon my thought and that of Adler, already mentioned. When I began reading Simon I was older (by a few but important years!) and more mature, so his work was perhaps not as influential a force as was Adler's. I was pondering and assimilating the great classics of ancient and medieval philosophy, above all the works of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and here was a Thomistic philosopher who provided me with the key to many a complicated question. (In philosophy, as I put it, questions verge on mystery, and Simon respected that mystery while shedding much light upon the matters in question.) At the same time, he was philosophizing about the same things that I was in my own way, and he taught me much of great value for my own intellectual development and for use in my courses. I delved deeply into the books of Simon, from his early works in French, *Ontologie du connaître* and *Critique de la connaissance morale* to his later works that appeared in English and French, such as *The March to Liberation*, *The Community of the Free*, *Prevoir et savoir*, and *Philosophy of Democratic Government*. Studies, sometimes not as well-known as they should be, were original and thought-laden in my eyes, such as his "Essay on Sensation." I had done some thinking on this topic myself and this study afforded me invaluable leads and assistance. Above all, vivid in my recollection is the course referred to above, "The Critique of Scientific Knowledge," at Marquette University in the summer of 1946. I admired Simon's "depth of insight, clarity, ease in expounding intricate questions and firm grasp of principles," as I wrote at the time. The course, compressed though it was in a few weeks, was indelibly impressed on my memory and of lasting value to me. In a note I jotted down in the 1940s for a *Notebook on Readings*, I say upon reading Simon's *Prevoir et savoir* and his *Par dela l'experience du desespoir*, "I am profoundly moved and stirred. To read these books means so much more after contact with the living author."

In another note I have at hand, from an introduction I gave to one of his lectures, I write: "Personally, I have so much admiration for and owe so much to the philosophical work of Professor Simon that I could not begin to express how much all his thought and the inspiration of his philosophical life mean to me. Let me confess I stayed up until the wee hours the other morning reading *Philosophy of Democratic Government*. Once again, I marvelled at the author's firm grasp of principles coupled with a grip on the concrete facts of experience, and above all, his burning belief in freedom and democracy and his faith that the philosopher can and should

assist in their preservation. It is better, doubtless, to thirst and struggle for justice and freedom than merely to be able to define them. Here is a man who does both."

I continue, "He has a rare understanding and love for American life and democracy" and is proud of his American citizenship. I spoke of his work as a significant contribution to philosophy, something precious from the pen of one who will be reckoned as one of the most original thinkers Catholic culture in our country claims, one it cherishes even if it did not produce him.

Father Gerard Smith, S.J., of Marquette University, a master in philosophy himself and my mentor, who tended to become impatient with lecturers treading familiar ground, once remarked following Simon's lecture at a philosophical gathering in Chicago, to this effect: some men you congratulate upon a fine performance; with Simon, even if he is going over familiar territory, you learn something new every time. This was the way many of us in those days felt about the efforts of Simon. He was the philosopher's philosopher, able to teach even those competent in their chosen field (yet remain a colleague and attentive to the thoughts of others).

The title of one of Maritain's greatest books, if not indeed the greatest, is *Distinguer pour unir ou les degres du savoir*. Concerning the principle *distinguer pour unir* (distinguish in order to unite, or, as I would amplify it, let us analyze and clarify the components of a question so that we are able to work out a synthesis), Yves Simon more than once remarked to me that "Maritain stresses the unity and I stress the distinguishing." This pithy statement contains a truth that calls for elaboration. Of course, it goes without saying that each scholar performed both functions well, but it is unquestionable that each gave a certain priority in his actual work to either uniting or distinguishing. It is for this reason that I have called Yves Simon the Distinguisher as well as the Expositor.

Simon's expository style and analytic bent of mind were due in part to the formation he received, as he told me, in his student days at the *Lycee* in Paris. At that time, and no doubt still at present, the student received his real intellectual formation at that level. Among other things, students had to break down or analyze and then put back together in their own words the sermons of Bourdaloue, Fenélon, Bossuet, and other masters. Perhaps of greater importance, at least for Simon's task in philosophy, for his approach to and handling of difficult questions, was the influence of the Dominican theologian, philosopher, and commentator John of Saint Thomas (1589–1644). Maritain also acknowledged his debt to this great master. John's life span closely parallels that of Descartes (1596–1650); yet he seems to have worked in his environment free of concern for the power-

ful tides surging on the shores of philosophy. At the same time, he is unquestionably one of the great Thomistic masters. Here, too, the question was one of learning, clarity, analysis, and patient exposition.

Simon's characteristic way of handling problems, his analytic trend, was sometimes misunderstood. I recall a noted scholar, noted for his wisdom in the *philosophical* history of philosophy, remarking that Simon tended to drag things out and even to belabor the obvious, that is, what everybody in the field already knew. I think that what was overlooked here (and I realize I am referring to a scholar's remark in a brief conversation) was the intent of Simon. That which a number of those in our tradition knew and of which they stood in no need of full-blown expositions, he considered was precisely what needed to be expounded, clarified and demonstrated, so that nobody could mistake what was at stake or claim that important matters were being taken for granted.

Things people (or some of them) already knew or accepted required *demonstration*, as Simon saw it, that is, demonstration according to his exacting conviction about it. These things also demanded clear exposition, which some eminent scholars did not always provide, and of this procedure Simon was an ardent and able follower. Furthermore, while remaining close to the Scholastic tradition and to some extent even to its terminology, Simon excelled in presenting his thought in clear-cut contemporary language. The philosophical character of Yves Simon's work is rendered distinctive by this habit of philosophizing cogently and demonstratively. It is this quality that confers permanent value upon his work.

The religious and the philosophical are not intertwined in Simon's work as they are in that of Maritain. (It is true that Maritain carefully distinguishes the two realms.) *Simon is preeminently the philosopher adhering closely to philosophical argument.* At the same time, his is truly a Christian philosophy, though he rarely uses the term. What Simon himself says of Maritain's thought may be applied appropriately to his own. In a tribute to Jacques Maritain given at the Sheil School of Social Studies in November, 1948, Simon refers to Maritain's illuminating the *disinterestedness*, even, if you will, the *uselessness* of philosophy. In Maritain, he says, charity is paramount. The Christian philosopher should be ever ready to set philosophy aside and rush to succor his neighbor. He is referring in his tribute to his master, but I refer this thinking to his own attitude to philosophy and to life.

I would like to add that Simon's views may be put, in my opinion, more precisely if we adapt Maritain's language to the matter at hand. The philosopher steeped in the speculative (theoretical) order should be ready to set it aside and devote himself to the speculatively-practical order (e.g.,

the moral and even the political) and treat the burning questions of the day (e.g., racism and totalitarianism), and then, as an individual, along with other Christians and religious-minded persons, rush to the aid of his neighbors. The question is not merely one of helping your immediate neighbor, the neighbor, so to speak, in your neighborhood. The question is whether one should surrender philosophy and similar pursuits and succor those in need wherever they might be. The question was debated in the Catholic Worker movement and in other lay apostolates in the days when I was actively involved in them. Some held that everyone was bound to give up "higher pursuits" and directly help the poor and the suffering. Maritain, from a somewhat different perspective, held that the philosopher is of best service when he does not adhere to any party (save as a "private citizen," as it were) and *remains the philosopher*, concerning himself with the social, political, and cultural problems of the day.

This does not mean that Maritain did not rush to help a neighbor immediately if needed. (We know that he did.) Nor does it belie Yves Simon's emphasis upon charity to the neighbor. The apparent digression is intended to show that behind the plain and undeniable exhortation to dutiful service to the neighbor next door there lurk delicate questions that have been debated ever since apostolic times.

Let me return to the principal theme occupying us here, the place of Yves Simon in philosophy in the period I recall well. I do not hesitate to say that he should be appropriately called Christian philosopher and not simply the Expositor and Argumentator.

III. Jacques Maritain

Maritain and Simon appeared on the North American scene during a period when European scholars were effecting not an invasion but an incursion upon our shores. During the tumultuous Thirties and the war-torn Forties of this century, scholars and artists from a number of European countries, experts in various fields of higher learning and in various arts, were fleeing from the dictatorships of the Old World. Some of these men and women settled in the USA and Canada permanently; some remained for longer or shorter periods. Every one in his or her way made an important contribution to the maturation of American cultural life. North American Catholic Scholars and intellectuals were ready for such an "incursion," as I call it, and were disposed to welcome the newcomers with admiration and affection. Among the latter were Allers, Boehner, Mueller, von Hildebrand, and a number of others. Of course, Gilson and Maritain came as lecturers; Simon became a regular professor at Notre Dame. These were the three who influenced me most deeply at this intellectually impressionable time of my life.

As is well known, Etienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain were instrumental in the establishment of the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, Canada. Gilson was undoubtedly one of the founders of the Institute and a permanent force in it until his demise. (The authoritative work on Gilson by Lawrence K. Shook should be mentioned here.) A number of scholars, alumni and others, some to become distinguished in their own right, were deeply influenced by the teachings of this school. There were other important Catholic centers of higher learning (among them the Catholic University of America). Maritain lectured at Notre Dame; Simon, as mentioned, taught there. It is, then, against this background that we are able to appreciate more completely the impact of Maritain and Simon upon American Catholic scholarly life as well as their significant roles in regard to the so-called secular or "non-denominational" university world. As further background, it should be noted that in Europe, as Pope Pius XI had declared sorrowfully, the working classes were being lost to the Church. And the intellectual "elite" were in many instances disaffected. Europe excelled in outstanding scholars but conditions were, it seemed, more propitious for their labors in North America.

Every generation, even if it faces extraordinarily difficult times, such as severe depression or warfare, looks upon itself as ready for the challenges confronting it. Whether it be mere luck or, as some fervently believe, Divine Providence that brings one to the fateful crossroads, every youthful generation stands at the ready. And so with those of my own age: I felt, without being too conscious of these matters at the time, blessed by the opportunity I had to derive inspiration and learning from our European confreres and masters.

In 1933, Jacques Maritain crossed the Atlantic Ocean for the first time in order to give lectures in North America. His association with the New World was to last, with only a few interruptions, for over thirty years. The Maritains dwelt in the United States for seventeen of these years, including the period of World War II.

Jacques Maritain means so much to all of us that you appreciate how difficult it is to speak of him in a few words. As for myself, I can hardly refrain from a kind of adolescent fervor when I refer to his inspiration in my youthful years and to his continuing presence as revered master in my later ones.

In these recollections, I focus upon his books, his lectures, our meetings, and our friendship. With a kind of adolescent fervor, I represent books, lectures, "encounters," and personal associations as winged messengers, as golden moments, as Beautiful Moments, and as Love-in-Christ. I employ poetic language as I am not writing a scholarly study, but trying to recapture the livingness of these relationships—particularly as they

were experienced in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

There are notes in my possession, as already pointed out with respect to Adler and Simon, affording valuable information on my personal reading of Maritain's books. The writings of Maritain, like *magical winged messengers*, introduced me to the mystery of being and the wonders of the human being as illuminated by one I came to revere as the Prophet-Philosopher. (I hasten to add that my first philosophy professor at Fordham University [1933–34] paved the way for this intellectual adventure and gave me my first soaring experience in philosophy.) My notes indicate that I acquired first of all his *Petite logique*, in 1933. Books arrived regularly from the *Librarie du Cerf* in Paris, and I continued to add to our collection. To go beyond the scope of the present essay, I gathered Maritain's books in Spanish and Portuguese on trips to South America, beginning in the late Sixties and on into the Seventies and Eighties; Rome was fertile soil for picking up his works in Italian. My notes indicate further that I began my first reading in Maritain during 1934 and 1935, undergraduate years at Saint Louis University. By 1936–37, I was reading *Les degres du savoir* in the original and presented a lecture and a paper on its themes in a graduate course at the same institution. I return later to the subject of reading the books of Maritain and the influence they had upon me.

Maritain delivered a lecture at Marquette University in 1941, and this was the first one of his I ever attended and the first time I saw him. (There was a brief meeting in a group situation.) In 1949 and 1950, I was the principal figure in organizing and chairing two lectures he gave on contemplation and the spiritual life in Milwaukee. In the 1950s, I drove frequently to South Bend (a distance round-trip of almost 400 miles) and to Chicago to hear him lecture at the University of Notre Dame and at the Committee on Social Thought of the University of Chicago. (So great was the enthusiasm for the leaders of "the revival," *le renouveau catholique*, that a group of professors and students from Marquette University filled several cars on a trip to the University of Chicago just to hear the great Anglo-Catholic poet and critic T.S. Eliot.)

There were meetings with Maritain at lectures, receptions, and similar occasions in a variety of places, but the first personal meeting, or what I would call *un rencontre*, was in 1949, at his home on Linden Lane in Princeton, close to the university, where he was a professor. I took notes of our conversation. Among other things, I recall his urging upon young American Catholic scholars the importance of studying and evaluating the leading American philosophers of the day. In a similar vein, around the same time, Etienne Gilson was propounding the same message to Catholic philosophers at a convention of the American Catholic Philosophical As-

sociation in Cleveland in the early 1950s. He himself was a recognized authority on French philosophy, particularly that of the "Founder of Modern Philosophy," René Descartes.

In 1952–54, I studied Contemporary French Philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium on a Fulbright Award and then at the Sorbonne in France. Jacques Maritain and Yves Simon willingly wrote letters of recommendation for me.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when I was teaching at Villanova University in the Philadelphia area, I visited Maritain at Princeton on many occasions. It was during this period, I would say, that we became friends. I still venerated him as a Master, but with extraordinary *gentillesse* he put me at ease.

The last encounter in the United States was upon the occasion of his last visit to this country in 1966. Idella and I drove from Boston, where we were teaching at Boston College, to see him in Princeton. It was a wintry day. I recall he insisted on taking us to dinner at a French restaurant near Princeton University. He proved to be a charming host.

In meetings with Maritain, one was struck by his attentiveness to his interlocutor. He listened with care to your thoughts. In the manner of the truly great who are often truly humble, he looked upon you as though you were the most important person in the world. He concentrated upon you as an individual person present with him and gave no sign of thinking of his next appointment. During this period, and even more so later on in his life, Maritain suffered bouts of extreme fatigue and even of illness, and yet remained affable and self-giving to friends and visitors.

Of his attentiveness and courtesy I have already spoken and of these qualities and of his humility and humanity I received over the years many confirmations. I recall that one of my students at Villanova University who came from Princeton remembered as a child in a Catholic grade school seeing this elderly gentleman with a scarf closely wound around his neck at the parish Mass every morning. His simplicity and devotedness deeply impressed the youngster, who dimly remembered the old gentleman referred to as a great professor or philosopher. I recall his considerateness, his grave attention to young students at a Marquette University reception, while *very important people* waited their turn to greet him.

On one occasion, my father and I visited the Maritains at Princeton. We had traveled from northeastern Jersey that day. My father, an average intelligent American of Irish descent (who did not refer to himself as an hyphenated American but was proud to call himself simply an American), was, as I realized, a kind of "specimen" for the Maritains and Raïssa's sister, Véra. They usually consorted with academic or scholarly types, "rarefied beings." Véra said, "Il est formidable!" We sat at tea in the small

dining room decorated with the lovely work of the Maritains' artist-friend, Andre Girard, five of us: Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, Véra Oumançoff, my father, and I. With the utmost courtesy, they listened to my father's ideas, and his helpful suggestions about practical problems facing the Maritains were gratefully received. Later, my father always referred to the Maritains with great respect as "very fine people."

At Toulouse in Southern France not far from the Pyrenees at the Community of the Little Brothers of which he was already a professed member, my final *rencontre* or "encounter" with Jacques took place in January, 1973. It was to be only a few months before his passing away in April of that year. Jacques was occupying a cottage or hut in the compound. I recall that the Little Brother who escorted me to his door warned me, "Il fait très chaud dedans." ("It's very hot in there.") It was indeed extremely warm, and Jacques was sitting there with his scarf, as was habitual with him, around his neck. He seemed pleased to see me and pressed me to stay, when I prepared to leave after a while, not wishing to fatigue him. He was ninety years of age and told me that the doctor had informed him that he was in good shape for a man of his age. He added simply, "I know that at my age I can go at any time." He added something which astounded me at the time, although it does not now that I have attained the proverbial three-score-and-ten. He said that even a lifetime of study and writing seemed little or nothing in comparison to the task to be accomplished in philosophy. He had simply prepared the way, he was still a tyro, another lifetime would be required to develop the thoughts as they matured. He was not thinking only of himself; he was thinking of Saint Thomas and of his own twentieth-century compeers. Their work was merely in a preparatory stage; it clamored for completion. On another theme, Maritain remarked how important it was to follow faithfully the teachings of the Holy Father. It was unwise to rely too much on the Bishops, at least many of those in France.

Maritain was grateful for the personal message I brought him from Pope Paul VI, whom he had known for many years and with whom he was closely associated during the time he was French Ambassador to the Holy See and resided in Rome (1945–48). In his chamber, there were two photographs: one of the Pope and the other of his wife, Raïssa. He spoke of his beloved departed partner as though she were present—she was verily to him a presence—and of his longing to be reunited with her. The ninety-year-old's voice broke as he spoke of her with unswerving youthful love.

Shortly before I visited Jacques in Toulouse, my associate in foundation work and I had the special privilege of a very private audience with Pope Paul VI at the Vatican. Five persons were present: the Holy Father, his interpreter, an American priest of Italian descent, my associate, and I. The

conversation, if that is the appropriate word, turned to Maritain, and the Pope's eyes brightened. He spoke warmly of the one he had revered and still regarded as a Master from the time he was a young priest. He even mentioned that he had long ago translated *Three Reformers* into Italian. At one point, the Holy Father paused, and reflecting on his friend Jacques Maritain for a moment, he said simply: "È un santo." Later, on the occasion of Jacques' death, Pope Paul VI referred to him as the master of those who know and love.

I mention this audience, even though it is beyond the period that mainly concerns me here, to illustrate the regard and affection in which Maritain was held to the end of his days. I do not know whether I am more impressed by the tribute paid him by the Pope himself, or the veneration he aroused in young people, even children. In a way, each regard speaks volumes, and one is incommensurable with the other.

There is a sheaf of correspondence between Jacques and the two of us, Idella and me. It is treasured, even though it may not be very significant in itself. (I do hold that every letter, particularly from a famous person and no matter how brief it may be, sheds light upon or brings out a new aspect of the personality.) As time went on, the correspondence became more friendly and Jacques Maritain would conclude by saying, sometimes in French, sometimes in English, "with affection and love, your old Jacques" or "votre vieux Jacques." Even though Maritain was old at the time he signed himself thus, I believe the connotation of *vieux* is not merely "old" but implies a sort of comradeship, as when one Frenchman calls another, "*mon vieux*."

Let me return to the topic of reading Maritain. In my undergraduate years at Saint Louis University (1934–36), I was busily reading *The Angelic Doctor* and wrote a study on Saint Thomas Aquinas, depending upon Maritain, for the university's literary magazine, *The Fleur-de-Lis*. I have already mentioned the report and paper I gave on *Les degres du savoir*. The notes on my readings contain numerous references to reading Maritain's work in the 1940s and 1950s and there are comments either short or lengthy on these books and articles. In my teaching years at Marquette University (1939–58), I was strongly influenced by Etienne Gilson in my approach to the history of philosophy, and, with him as a guide, I strove to present it as a *philosophical* history, not a mere recital of names and themes. However, I continued to study and to derive much from the writings of Maritain, and his work was of great aid to me in my courses in what was then called "systematic philosophy." In subsequent years, at Boston College and other universities, I gave graduate courses in "Contemporary Thomism" with much attention devoted to Maritain, and, on one occasion at least, I gave a course on *The Degrees of Knowledge*.

Permit me to mention my meditative reading and rereading of Maritain in the 1980s, even though those years go far beyond the period upon which I am focusing. No longer a full-time philosophy professor, though I did lecture occasionally, I began in 1981 to read something by Maritain every day, along with the Jerusalem Bible (often in French) and Saint Thomas Aquinas (in the Latin). No longer bound to prepare lectures or to write scholarly articles (and the pressure to accomplish these tasks was intense, as many of you know; I would hesitate to record how many undergraduate and graduate courses I taught in my active years), I was enabled to read Maritain (as well as Saint Thomas) slowly and reflectively. Sometimes I would select a study more or less at random; for a long while, I proceeded methodically through the first volume of Henri Bars' two-volume edition of the *Oeuvres*, but always in a leisurely fashion. Recently, I began moving through the *Oeuvres complètes*, of which a number of volumes have already been published. Freed, as I have said, from the demands of teaching, I was able to enjoy the words of Maritain as never before. Insights into the mystery of being and of man as he expounded them came to me as never before. I had the privilege of reading "pages" and not "texts." I was, in short, able to savor the mind-and-thought of Maritain and came to revere him all the more as one of the greatest philosophers of all time. And this appreciation was aroused after a period (the last decade or so) of my teaching career in which I had read widely and deeply in the contemporary philosopher, and in the modern classics, Descartes, Hegel, and the rest.

I mention all this because it shows how the reading of Maritain is a lifelong pursuit and it illustrates Simon's remark that Maritain is inexhaustible. I would like to add that even in the winter of his long span of years, Jacques Maritain has given us pages glowing with springlike freshness.

In the part of this essay devoted to Simon, I quoted him as saying in effect that he emphasized "distinguishing" while Maritain put stress on "writing" or "synthesizing." As I have already noted, the Maritain who was at his best in *synthesizing* could *distinguish* and present a closely reasoned piece of exposition.

His habit of synthesizing sometimes led to extraordinary compactness. In a paragraph-long sentence there would be included a parenthesis—a lengthy parenthesis in a sentence perhaps overlong—and yet the parenthesis was well worth the reading as it often contained an unforgettable insight!

Maritain disliked labels or labeling anyone's philosophy, including his own. Above all, he rejected the term "Neo-Thomism." He recognized that it was important for thinkers of other schools to know where you stood in

philosophy, and therefore he accepted "Thomism" and "Christian philosophy" as identifying his own philosophy. He was never altogether comfortable with these appellations. In *The Peasant of the Garonne* he employs his coinage "ontosophy." He considers that "philosophy" and "philosopher" are somewhat ambivalent terms and takes delight in opposing "ontosophers" to "ideosophers." (There are giants in modern times whom he respects and from whom he says we can learn much and who are in his judgment not real philosophers but rather ideosophers.)

Maritain is *philosopher* in the strictest sense: he knows superlatively how to philosophize his way to definitive conclusions with rigor, clarity, and exactitude. I do believe and maintain that his philosophy comprehends a special dimensionality, expanding the frontiers of what he insisted was an autonomous discipline. How should we denominate his distinctive philosophy? Dare we label it? One of Maritain's favored disciples, Little Brother of Jesus Heinz Schmitz, called it "theo-philosophy." There is some merit in this somewhat awkward appellation. However, there is another I prefer.

Upon considering the stature, stance, and status of Jacques Maritain, and realizing the risk involved that his standing as a philosopher might be overshadowed, I have ventured to call him the *Prophet-Philosopher*. I use *prophetic* not in the full or rather specific religious sense, but as a term pertaining primarily to the temporal order, that is, to the social-economic-political-cultural *complexus*, and especially where it borders upon or is illuminated and inspired by the "religious dimension." In a word, prophecy as pertaining to the temporal, but brightened and enlightened by Revelation.

Perhaps Maritain himself would consider this treatment of his work as much too serious. In the letter he wrote to the Little Brothers of Jesus announcing his acceptance as one of them by the Congregation, he suggests half-playfully that perhaps his name should be "Don Quixoto of Saint Thomas." There is something of Leon Bloy in Maritain the elder as well as Maritain the younger. When he jokes about himself, his remarks should be taken, if not too seriously, at least as revelatory of the man's humble view of himself.

In philosophy, one is a Master when free from tutelage and free and capable of philosophizing in one's own person. Even if one is mature enough intellectually to call oneself a philosopher, or perhaps one should say "ontosopher," one can without inconsistency look upon one's teacher as the Master. Maritain, like Simon and Adler, is the philosopher's philosopher. I revere him alongside Thomas Aquinas as my Master and know I can continue to learn more and more from the inexhaustible treasure-trove of his thought.

For these reasons, I consider Jacques Maritain the Synthesizer and Prophetic Voice of our age.

The idea of attempting to encompass three thinkers of the stature of Adler, Simon, and Maritain in one presentation is something I half-regret. However, it is one thing to attempt an evaluation of their philosophy, as I have said, another to evoke recollections for the value they have in bringing out the impact concretely upon the younger generation of the 1930s to the 1950s. Along with significant differences in style, in perspective, and (from a certain point of view) even in their very conception of philosophy or, rather, in the dimensions it assumes in their intellectualizing about it, I came to recognize that there is something common in their search for reality and in their defense of the classical Tradition. Each of these philosophers has championed in his own distinctive way the Great Tradition and has sought to restore wisdom to its rightful role. In my recollection and present view, Adler is the thinker, the teacher-encyclopedist who exhorts and exhibits, particularly to those who are not specialists in scholarship, fundamental mind-saving truths. Simon is the thinker, the teacher-argumentator, whose discourse in rigorous and careful procedure leads minds to definitive conclusions about reality. Maritain is the thinker, the teacher-as-prophetic utterer, who leads persons by the hand to a realm beyond the ordinary confines of life, where dwells Wisdom interfused with Charity.

As philosophers, each of these thinkers draws near the mystery of reality and illumines it for every one of us who has a philosophical bent. Adler is the one who approaches reality through the keys of the Great Basic Books and the Great Basic Ideas they contain. Simon is the one who approaches the mystery of reality by utilizing deductive and inductive argumentation. Maritain is the person who approaches the mystery of reality by delving into its depths and scaling its heights and delivering it throbbing and existential to us.

Vivid in my recollections undimmed by time are these philosophical friends. In rather theoretical terms, I have ventured to name them as follows: Adler is the Demonstrator and Remonstrator, Simon is the Expositor and Argumentator, and Maritain is the Synthesizer and Illuminator.