



THE PERSON AND THE  
COMMON GOOD

---

JACQUES MARITAIN

THE PERSON  
*AND THE*  
COMMON GOOD

BY  
JACQUES MARITAIN

*Translated by*  
JOHN J. FITZGERALD

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS

First paperback edition © 1966 by  
University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556  
<http://www.undpress.nd.edu>  
All Rights Reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America

Reprinted in 1972, 1977, 1985, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2002

Copyright © 1947 by  
Charles Scribner's Sons

Copyright © 1946 by  
The Review of Politics

∞ *This book is printed on acid-free paper.*

## *Acknowledgments*

We have undertaken in this paper a reconsideration and development of two lectures: the first one, entitled "The Human Person and Society," was the Deneke Lecture, given at Oxford, May 9, 1939, and published in a limited edition (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1940); the second one, entitled "The Person and the Individual," was given in Rome at the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas, November 22, 1945, and will appear in Volume XII of the Acts of this Academy. [Editor's Note: Chapters I-IV have appeared in "The Review of Politics" for October, 1946. Chapter V has not previously appeared in print.] We have also made such use of several of our earlier inquiries into this subject (Cf. *Freedom in the Modern World* and *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*) as to be able to present here a brief and, we trust, sufficiently clear synthesis of our position on a problem about which there have been numerous and (as I like to believe) involuntary misunderstandings.

Rome, Feb. 6, 1946.

J. M.

## *Contents*

### CHAPTER I

<i>Introductory</i>	11
---------------------	----

### CHAPTER II

<i>The Positions of St. Thomas on the Ordination of the Person to Its Ultimate End</i>	15
--	----

### CHAPTER III

<i>Individuality and Personality</i>	31
--------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER IV

<i>The Person and Society</i>	47
-------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER V

<i>Contemporary Problems</i>	90
------------------------------	----

<i>Index of Names</i>	107
-----------------------	-----



THE PERSON AND THE  
COMMON GOOD

---

JACQUES MARITAIN



## "A PRIMER OF PRINCIPLE"

"This meaty little book is a primer of principle which ought to be read and read again in any hour of momentous decision. We must know what it is we are defending when we strive to uphold democracy." —George Shuster, *New York Herald Tribune*

Presenting with moving insight the relations between man, as a person and as an individual, and the society of which he is a part, Maritain's treatment of a lasting topic speaks to this generation as well as those to come.

He makes clear the personalism rooted in the doctrine of St. Thomas and separates the social philosophy centered in the dignity of the human person from every social philosophy centered in the primacy of the individual and the private good.

University of Notre Dame Press  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
[www.undpress.nd.edu](http://www.undpress.nd.edu)

Cover design: Juanita Dix



THE PERSON  
*AND THE*  
COMMON GOOD

BY  
JACQUES MARITAIN

*Translated by*  
JOHN J. FITZGERALD

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS



First paperback edition © 1966 by  
University of Notre Dame  
Notre Dame, Indiana 46556  
<http://www.undpress.nd.edu>  
All Rights Reserved

Manufactured in the United States of America

Reprinted in 1972, 1977, 1985, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2002

Copyright © 1947 by  
Charles Scribner's Sons

Copyright © 1946 by  
The Review of Politics

*∞ This book is printed on acid-free paper.*

## *Acknowledgments*

We have undertaken in this paper a reconsideration and development of two lectures: the first one, entitled "The Human Person and Society," was the Deneke Lecture, given at Oxford, May 9, 1939, and published in a limited edition (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1940); the second one, entitled "The Person and the Individual," was given in Rome at the Pontifical Academy of Saint Thomas, November 22, 1945, and will appear in Volume XII of the Acts of this Academy. [Editor's Note: Chapters I-IV have appeared in "The Review of Politics" for October, 1946. Chapter V has not previously appeared in print.] We have also made such use of several of our earlier inquiries into this subject (Cf. *Freedom in the Modern World* and *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*) as to be able to present here a brief and, we trust, sufficiently clear synthesis of our position on a problem about which there have been numerous and (as I like to believe) involuntary misunderstandings.

Rome, Feb. 6, 1946.

J. M.



## *Contents*

### CHAPTER I

<i>Introductory</i>	11
---------------------	----

### CHAPTER II

<i>The Positions of St. Thomas on the Ordination of the Person to Its Ultimate End</i>	15
--	----

### CHAPTER III

<i>Individuality and Personality</i>	31
--------------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER IV

<i>The Person and Society</i>	47
-------------------------------	----

### CHAPTER V

<i>Contemporary Problems</i>	90
------------------------------	----

<i>Index of Names</i>	107
-----------------------	-----



THE PERSON  
*AND THE*  
COMMON GOOD



# I

---

## *Introductory*

**A**MONG the truths of which contemporary thought stands in particular need and from which it could draw substantial profit is the doctrine of the distinction between individuality and personality. The essential importance of this distinction is revealed in the principles of St. Thomas. Unfortunately a right understanding of it is difficult to achieve and requires an exercise of metaphysical insight to which the contemporary mind is hardly accustomed.

Does society exist for each one of us, or does each one of us exist for society? Does the parish exist for the parishioner or the parishioner for the parish? This question, we feel immediately, involves two aspects, in each of which there must be some element of truth. A unilateral answer



would only plunge us into error. Hence, we must disengage the formal principles of a truly comprehensive answer and describe the precise hierarchies of value which it implies. The Nineteenth Century experienced the errors of individualism. We have witnessed the development of a totalitarian or exclusively communal conception of society which took place by way of reaction. It was natural, then, that in a simultaneous reaction against both totalitarian and individualistic errors the concept of the human person, incorporated as such into society, be opposed to both the idea of the totalitarian state and that of the sovereignty of the individual. In consequence, minds related to widely differing schools of philosophic thought and quite uneven in intellectual exactitude and precision have sensed in the notion and term of "person" the solution sought. Whence, the "personalist" current which has developed in our time. Yet nothing can be more remote from the facts than the belief that "personalism" is one school or one doctrine. It is rather a phenomenon of reaction against two opposite errors, which inevitably contains elements of very unequal merits. Not a personalist doctrine, but personalist aspirations confront us. There are, at least, a dozen