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Interview

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Jacques Maritain on Anti-Semitism and Human Rights: A Conversation with Daniele Lorenzini

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Abstract

As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the ongoing contemporary publishing boom in the history of the origins of human rights affords us an opportunity to better understand the philosopher Jacques Maritain's distinctive contribution to the post-Second World War human rights project. Daniele Lorenzini's groundbreaking research into Maritain's thought and activism during this period offers human rights educators a fresh resource for thinking and talking about the foundations of that project. The JHRP's Brian Phillips recently spoke with Daniele Lorenzini in New York City.

Keywords: anti-Semitism; Committee of Catholics for Human Rights; history of human rights; Jacques Maritain; UNESCO Committee on the Theoretical Bases of Human Rights

For human rights educators, any presentation or training session on the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) will most likely include some reference to what might be described as the 'founding mothers and fathers' of that document. Eleanor Roosevelt and René Cassin will almost always make their appearance in such a discussion—while the French philosopher Jacques Maritain is often cited as perhaps the key intellectual influence in the process leading up to 10 December 1948. As we mark the seventieth anniversary of the UDHR, the ongoing contemporary publishing boom in the history of the origins of human rights affords us an opportunity to better understand Maritain's distinctive contribution to the post-Second World War human rights project. Philosopher Daniele Lorenzini's groundbreaking research into Maritain's thought and activism during this period offers human rights educators a fresh resource for thinking and talking about the

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foundations of that project. Daniele Lorenzini's work is especially significant for practitioners as it provides a compelling portrait of Maritain as both scholar and advocate—a complex man of ideas concretely and passionately engaged with the defining events of his time. Daniele Lorenzini is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie 'Move-in Louvain' Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre Prospéro (Université Saint-Louis – Bruxelles) and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Contemporary Critical Thought (Columbia University). Starting in October 2019, he will be Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the University of Warwick. He is the author of *Jacques Maritain e i diritti umani* [Jacques Maritain and Human Rights] (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2012), *Éthique et politique de soi* [Ethics and Politics of the Self] (Paris: Vrin, 2015), and *La force du vrai* [The Force of Truth] (Lormont: Le Bord de l'Eau, 2017). The JHRP's Brian Phillips recently spoke with Daniele Lorenzini in New York City.

Brian Phillips: Your research on Jacques Maritain (Lorenzini 2012) highlights the decisive impact of his relationship to an initiative called the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights at the start of his wartime exile in the United States during the 1940s. You have concluded that this group—originally called the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti-Semitism—played a very particular role in the evolution of Maritain's thinking and writing about human rights. Two key figures associated with the Committee, Emmanuel Chapman and Harry McNeill, had in fact previously studied with Maritain. Why was this Committee first established, and how did Maritain's contact with the group and its advocacy programme come to influence his own conception of human rights?

Daniele Lorenzini: I got interested in the Committee of Catholics for Human Rights (CCHR) thanks to an article on Maritain and human rights published by Samuel Moyn in 2008 (Moyn 2008). The fascinating history of the CCHR and its relevance for crucial developments in Maritain's thought during the 1940s were still largely unknown, and the article only alluded to them in general and—as it eventually turned out—slightly inaccurate terms. At that time, I was writing a paper on the evolution of Maritain's conception of human rights, with a view to challenging the widely accepted narrative that his ideas on human rights basically remained the same from the early 1930s to the end of his life. I wanted to show that, on the contrary, his views on this topic radically changed between the end of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s, that is, when in his texts he systematically started referring to 'human rights' as a perfect synonym for the 'rights of the human person'. What might seem a minor linguistic detail is indeed the sign of a huge conceptual shift. To advocate the rights of the human person, as Maritain already did during the 1930s, was simply a way of reiterating the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church according to which every human person possesses a set of inalienable rights because she was created in the image of God. Therefore, those rights stem from the natural law that the Catholic Church alone can legitimately interpret. In other words, the traditional Catholic teaching on natural law and the rights of the human person is simply a way of reaffirming the exclusive authority of the Catholic Church in the definition of the rules and principles for a just social–political order. Now, starting in 1939, Maritain abandons this traditional discourse, arguing that the inalienable human rights that stem from natural law coincide with the rights defined in the eighteenth century during the American and French Revolutions. Through an unprecedented historicization of the natural law, Maritain thus legitimizes the achievements of Western secular and liberal modernity in a way that anticipates what the Catholic Church

would do—in a far more ambiguous and partial way—only 20 years later, during the Second Vatican Council.

How to explain this radical change in Maritain's views on human rights? Since it took place at the outbreak of the Second World War and during the first years of Maritain's 'exile' in the United States, I turned my attention to his American friends and colleagues. What role—if any—did they play in the transformation of Maritain's thought during the tragic wartime period? I thus discovered, in the Maritain archives in Kolbsheim, France, his correspondence with the three main promoters of the CCHR—Emmanuel Chapman, Harry McNeill, and Robert Pollock. As young professors at Fordham University, they had known Maritain for several years before the outbreak of the war and were profoundly influenced by his writings. In the archives, I also found a copy of the Statement of Purpose and Program of the CCHR, and the first issue (published in July 1939) of the journal edited by the CCHR, *The Voice for Human Rights*—a journal to which Maritain himself contributed two papers. It was Chapman who sent them to Maritain, emphasizing in his letter the crucial role that Maritain's thought and engagement had played for him and his friends in the fight against anti-Semitism when they decided to create the CCHR.

The CCHR was founded in New York in April 1939. From the beginning, Chapman played the most prominent role in this intellectual and political 'adventure', as he was both the Executive Secretary of the CCHR and the Editor of *The Voice for Human Rights*. The purpose of the CCHR was to fight against all forms of racism and anti-Semitism, showing that Christian teaching, correctly interpreted, unequivocally rejects and condemns them. Originally called the Committee of Catholics to Fight Anti-Semitism, it soon changed its name in order to emphasize that anti-Semitism is only one of the many forms that racial hatred, social intolerance, and religious discrimination were taking in the United States at that time. The CCHR aimed in particular to oppose the nefarious influence of Charles E. Coughlin, the 'radio priest' whose weekly broadcast to millions of listeners and whose journal, *Social Justice*, were widely disseminating racist and anti-Semitic prejudices in American society. Many important Catholic personalities were involved in and gave their support to the CCHR: more than 100 members were mentioned in the first issue of *The Voice for Human Rights*, including Dorothy Day, Charles C. Miltner, and John A. Ryan. Eleanor Roosevelt publicly praised the initiative. However, from the beginning, the CCHR and its promoters also had to face many critiques and accusations, including being anti-Catholic and philo-Communist. The publication of *The Voice for Human Rights* was interrupted and the CCHR was dissolved at the end of 1940, but it was reconstituted in April 1944, as soon as the outcome of the war was assured. Its presence, alongside that of several other NGOs, turned out to be crucial to convince the newly born United Nations (UN) to create a commission specifically devoted to the drafting of a universal declaration of human rights. However, due to enduring financial problems, the CCHR had to be dissolved again in 1947, this time permanently. Chapman died of cancer one year later, at the age of 43.

Now, on the one hand, it is clear that Maritain's thought and his fight against anti-Semitism—and Catholic anti-Semitism in particular—crucially contributed to defining the scope and philosophy of the CCHR. On the other hand, however, it is also undeniable that the CCHR exerted a strong influence on Maritain's ideas starting from mid-1939. More precisely, the CCHR and its journal constituted a sort of 'laboratory' in which Maritain's views, immersed in a different cultural background (that of the American Catholicism of the time), were transformed and became far more radical. Indeed, from the beginning, the CCHR defended the thesis of an essential connection between the defence of both

Christianity and democracy; the fight against totalitarianism; the condemnation of all forms of racism and anti-Semitism; and the implementation of a set of universal human rights—a thesis that Maritain was able to fully formulate only a couple of years later, between 1941 and 1943. The influence that his American friends and colleagues involved in the CCHR exerted on him therefore accounts for many of the crucial developments in Maritain's thought during his wartime exile.

BP: Prior to his residency in the United States during the Second World War, Maritain had been speaking and publishing against anti-Semitism for some time in France. This is perhaps the essential 'back story' of Maritain's role as a champion of human rights during the 1940s. You also edited a collection of Maritain's writings on anti-Semitism (Maritain 2016). Can you tell us something about Maritain's sometimes complicated relationship with the struggle against anti-Semitism in inter-war Europe—and why his writings on the subject may still be of value to human rights practitioners and educators today?

DL: I edited that book precisely in order to provide the scholars and readers interested in Maritain and the history of human rights with the complete spectrum of Maritain's views on anti-Semitism—from his first controversial papers of the 1920s to his last texts of the 1970s. My intent was neither polemic nor apologetic: I wanted to challenge both the narrative of Maritain constantly and unambiguously condemning anti-Semitism in all its forms, and that of him being nothing more than a 'metaphysical anti-Semite'. The writings collected in the book show the complexity of Maritain's intellectual path, characterized by some guiding ideas that remained essentially the same over the course of the years, but also by a series of conceptual shifts that deserve to be carefully addressed. Maritain's relationship to the issue of anti-Semitism was complex and multifaceted for a very specific reason—one that we often tend to forget: to be a Catholic has almost always meant to be an anti-Semite to some degree. Therefore, the struggle that Maritain started to wage during the 1930s against this widely accepted idea that one could be both a Catholic and an anti-Semite is so interesting (and so difficult) precisely because it was a struggle with his own culture, and in a sense with himself. The limitations and ambiguities of its outcomes should thus be interpreted in this light.

To be schematic, I would say that Maritain's thought on anti-Semitism traversed three main 'phases' between 1921 and 1945. A first phase, during the 1920s, in which Maritain, while already trying to separate himself from the nationalist and violent form of anti-Semitism fostered by the Action Française, still falls victim to some of the most traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes. These include the idea of an international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world and to thus destroy Christian civilization. More precisely, in his first paper on this topic, Maritain distinguishes a theological and spiritual aspect of anti-Semitism, that he condemns, from a social and political one, that he legitimizes to some extent, claiming that one shouldn't expect from the Jews a real attachment to the common good of Western (Christian) civilization. Then, during the 1930s, in the wake of the unprecedented dramatic persecution of the Jews in many European countries, Maritain abandons his previous conclusions and radically condemns all forms of anti-Semitism. However, he still formulates such a condemnation mainly from a theological and spiritual perspective, claiming that the Christian faith and teaching are fundamentally incompatible with anti-Semitism. He largely leaves aside the social and political aspects of the issue of anti-Semitism in those tragic years. It is only in a third phase, between the end of the 1930s and

the beginning of the 1940s, that Maritain is able to find a language allowing him to conduct his fight against anti-Semitism (almost) without ambiguities: the language of human rights, that his friends in the CCHR were also using in their battle against Father Coughlin. Indeed, during his wartime exile in the United States, Maritain presents anti-Semitism as an unacceptable, criminal negation of those fundamental human rights that the Jews, like all other people, possess. The social and political perspective thus comes to the fore, and Maritain's condemnation of anti-Semitism takes on—for the first time—a universal value.

Therefore, if his writings against anti-Semitism published in the 1930s do constitute the essential 'back story' of Maritain's role as a champion of human rights during the 1940s, it is also important to emphasize in turn that it is his embrace of human rights starting from 1939 that allows him to formulate his condemnation of anti-Semitism in the most unambiguous terms. Indeed, his earlier positions (that surfaced again during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s) suffered from two significant shortcomings. On the one hand, Maritain had an unshakable faith in the final reintegration of 'Israel' within the Church, since according to him the Jewish people will eventually come to acknowledge the Christ as the Messiah. This is why Judaism as an existing faith to be recognized and protected in its own right is only rarely addressed by Maritain. On the other hand, in order to make his condemnation of anti-Semitism stronger in the eyes of his fellow Christians, Maritain often linked anti-Semitism and anti-Christianity, arguing that the roots of the anti-Semitic passion are constituted by a dangerous 'Christophobia' that alone can explain its violence. In doing so, he thus once again runs the risk of negating the specificity of anti-Semitism in and of itself.

I think that Maritain's lifelong struggle with himself and his own (Christian) culture in order to formulate an unambiguous condemnation of anti-Semitism can still be extremely instructive. In particular, it clearly shows us that the language of universal human rights is crucial in that it allows one to overcome the limitations of an attitude of paternalistic tolerance grounded in the certainty of possessing the one and only Truth. Indeed, if one starts from the (religious, philosophical, ethical) Truth that one thinks one possesses, the battle for human rights can only turn out to be limited and paternalistic. The universality of human rights can only be ensured if one is ready, when it comes to social and political debate, to put aside one's belief in a specific Truth and to fight this battle on a pragmatic level. I will come back to this point at the end of our discussion.

BP: In the crucial years leading up to the drafting of the UDHR (a process in which Maritain was to play such a critical role), how did the idea of transnational human rights develop in his work? What were some of the central principles and ideas embedded in Maritain's conception of human rights as a foundation for a post-war international order?

DL: In a radio broadcast on 24 November 1941, Maritain invited all free people to engage in a revolution that would once again give to the words 'freedom', 'equality', and 'fraternity' their true meaning. According to him, both the precondition and the outcome of such a revolution would be a new Declaration of Rights—one that the world stood so urgently in need of. Indeed, in those wartime years, Maritain never ceased to claim that a new Declaration of Human Rights should be one of the pillars of the post-war reconstruction of a just and peaceful international order. As I already mentioned, at that time Maritain was using the language of human rights in a systematic way, divorced at least in part from that of the dignity and rights of the human person—thus proposing the (hitherto liberal) defence of a set of inalienable human rights as one of the essential tools that would allow the

permanent defeat of totalitarian hatred and the construction of a new, democratic world order. Samuel Moyn recently emphasized that the Catholic Church, in the person of Pope Pius XII, also started—during the wartime period—to put the dignity of the human person, and the rights that follow from that dignity, at the centre of its public teaching (Moyn 2015), together with a clear choice for democracy over authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. It is crucial, however, to note that Pius XII never used the (secular and liberal) language of human rights, and that his appeal to the dignity of the human person and democracy was basically a way to try to secure a role for the Catholic Church in the post-war international order—since in his eyes it was always (and only) the Church that had the authority to define such an order in the correct way. On the contrary, Maritain was by then convinced that democracy and human rights, as they had already been defined by the Western liberal modernity, were legitimate in themselves, without the need for any intervention by the Catholic Church.

That's why I have always found Maritain's views on human rights so fascinating. With all their limitations, they nevertheless allow us to see that human rights can be coherently defended in a Catholic perspective without the need to give the Church the exclusive authority and power to define them. Moreover, they help us to put into perspective the widely accepted narrative according to which the Catholic Church has been a champion of human rights since 1942. Indeed, it is important to keep in mind that the human rights recognized and defended by the Catholic Church are still quite different from those inscribed in the 1948 UDHR—a Declaration that was cited for the first time in a pontifical document only in 1963 (in John XXIII's encyclical, *Pacem in terris*), and whose appreciation by the Pope was even then combined with criticisms (Menozzi 2012).

This is, in my view, the most significant and striking conclusion to be drawn from Maritain's 1942 book on human rights and natural law (Maritain 1942). In that text, he still (traditionally) presents natural law as the foundation for a set of universal and inalienable human rights, but he also (implicitly) denies the Catholic Church the exclusive authority to define them. He does so by historicizing the natural law, or better still, its knowledge by human beings. For instance, he argues that the accomplishments of the American and French Revolutions are simply the fruit of the hidden action of the leaven of the Gospels, and that therefore the modern declarations of rights are (imperfect but totally legitimate) realizations of the natural law in human history. In *Christianisme et démocratie*, published in 1943 (Maritain 1943), Maritain goes so far as to say that Christians should ask themselves why the rights of man and the citizen were first declared by rationalists, instead of Christians. In other words, between 1942 and 1943, Maritain came to interpret all the democratic accomplishments of the modern Western world in the light of a *secularized* Christian leaven, introduced into human history by Jesus Christ and the Apostles, thus making possible an unprecedented legitimation of those accomplishments—first and foremost among them the definition of a set of universal human rights. This was a legitimation that the Catholic Church was still not ready to (and would never fully and unambiguously) grant.

Maritain conceived of his book on human rights and natural law as an engaged political book far more than a philosophical one. It was in fact a '*livre de bataille*', and one that he put a lot of effort into introducing clandestinely in Occupied France. In this light, it is highly significant that, at the end of the book, Maritain decided to include the text of the Declaration of the International Rights of Man, adopted in 1929 during the New York session of the Institut de Droit International. It is a short, little-known text consisting of a

preamble followed by six articles, inspired by the declarations of rights included in the American and French Constitutions at the end of the eighteenth century, but clearly affirming the necessity to conceive of those rights outside of the boundaries of any particular nation state. It is precisely the fact that such a Declaration strongly insisted on the transnational nature of human rights that interested Maritain, who was already well aware of the urgent need of a new Declaration of Rights with an international validity and a truly universal significance. Of course, in his book, Maritain still defended a Christian view of human rights—that they are founded on natural law and pertain to every human being since she is a creature of God. But he was also keen to emphasize that everyone had the right to participate in the post-war reconstruction of a new world order, no matter her religious faith or political beliefs. The only necessary condition was, for Maritain, the belief in the foundational value of freedom, fraternity, justice, and the respect for the human person.

In fact, Maritain was concerned about the possibility of reaching an agreement between people of different cultures and faiths after the war, and he was already convinced that such an agreement could only be obtained on a practical level. The belief in the fundamental values of freedom and justice, and in the inviolability of a set of universal human rights would be enough—no matter how this belief was philosophically or religiously justified. The conclusion of Maritain's book is in this light extremely significant: a successful reconstruction of the world order after the atrocities perpetrated before and during the war would be possible only through the systematic, international implementation of all freedoms—spiritual freedoms, political freedoms, and social freedoms. This was a conclusion that was explicitly reminiscent of the famous 'Four Freedoms' speech that Franklin D. Roosevelt gave in front of the US Congress in January 1941.

BP: In our conversation, you mentioned that some of Maritain's books were actually parachuted into Occupied France during 1942 and 1943, and that Maritain himself spoke about human rights in wartime radio broadcasts. Can you provide us with some of the detail of these activities?

DL: During his wartime exile in the United States, Maritain never ceased to fight in his own way the battle for the liberation of 'his' France and of Europe more generally. He was convinced that the people in Europe stood in great need of ideological munitions, and that the war couldn't be won exclusively on the military level. It also had to be won on the spiritual level, in order to expel the totalitarian venom that had corrupted the minds and souls of so many during the 1930s. Maritain thus decided to inaugurate a new book series, published by the Éditions de la Maison Française, in New York. It was called 'Civilisation', and the first book that appeared in it was Maritain's *Les droits de l'homme et la loi naturelle*, in 1942. *Christianisme et démocratie* was published the following year, as well as a few other books, among them Georges Gurvitch's *La déclaration des droits sociaux* (1944). Maritain considered all the books published in the 'Civilisation' series as weapons to be used in the war against Nazi Germany. That's why, from the very beginning, he did his best in order to make them circulate in Occupied France. The manuscript of *Christianisme et démocratie*, for instance, was transmitted to the US Office of War Information in October 1942 in order to be parachuted onto French soil in the following months.

Maritain's objective was to contribute, on the ideological and spiritual levels, to Charles de Gaulle and *France Libre*'s political activity—in order to re-establish the truth vis-à-vis the Nazi-driven propaganda of the Vichy government and thus to prepare the ground for

the post-war reconstruction of his country. Together with his popular radio messages, broadcast first on the BBC and NBC, and then on Voice of America, Maritain's writings and editorial activity during those years explicitly aimed to create a 'new language' that would foster the reconciliation of what he considered to be the two most important traditions of France. These were the tradition of spiritual liberation connected to the figures of St Louis and Joan of Arc, on the one hand, and the tradition of secular emancipation inaugurated by the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, on the other.

Therefore, one can safely conclude that Maritain significantly contributed to an important propagandistic activity during the wartime period. The two fundamental pillars of such an activity were the idea that Christianity and democracy are essentially bound together and need to fight a common battle against every form of totalitarianism; and the strong belief that the world stands in need of a new declaration of human rights that would constitute the foundation for the post-war international order. It is possible to find some of the effects of such an activity, for instance, by reading the *Cahiers du Témoignage Chrétien*, a clandestine Catholic journal edited by Pierre Chaillet, which published its first issue in November 1941 and whose purpose was to organize a 'spiritual resistance' to the Vichy regime and the Nazi invader. In 1942, the *Cahiers* published an issue on racism, an issue on anti-Semitism, and an issue on human and Christian rights, with the explicit intent of combining the Catholic teaching and the principles of the 1789 French Revolution. No need to point out that, in those issues, the presence of Maritain's views was overwhelming.

As a militant Catholic philosopher, Maritain thus became one of the most influential French intellectuals during those tragic years. We shouldn't forget that his house in Meudon was one of the first to be searched by the Gestapo after the armistice, and that Charles de Gaulle asked him to become the first post-war French ambassador to the Holy See—a task that Maritain (reluctantly) accepted out of patriotism.

BP: Shortly after the Second World War, Maritain played a key role in the famed UNESCO consultation with world philosophers. In that exercise, a range of esteemed thinkers from across the globe were asked to contribute their thoughts on the idea of universal human rights—and on the possible contents of a declaration that could serve as the cornerstone of a global system of human rights promotion and protection. In reading Maritain's introduction to the published collection of texts submitted to UNESCO, one is immediately struck by Maritain's insistence on pragmatism in thinking about universal human rights. From the start, Maritain admits the impossibility of achieving any kind of consensus on the philosophical and religious grounds for claims about rights—particularly in the context of emerging East–West tensions. He prefers instead to view the UDHR as 'a practical goal'—emphasizing that 'agreement between minds can be reached spontaneously, not on the basis of common speculative ideas, but on common practical ideas, not on the affirmation of one and the same conception of the world, of man, and of knowledge, but upon the affirmation of a single body of beliefs for guidance in action' (Maritain 1950: 10). Can you comment on Maritain's embrace of the practical here—and what that says about his thinking about human rights during this period?

DL: As I already mentioned, the tragic experience of the war and the knowledge of the horrible Nazi crimes taught Maritain that a philosopher shouldn't enclose himself in an ivory tower when things around him go wrong. On the contrary, he has to constantly struggle in order for his philosophical views to be capable of soundly addressing current issues. It isn't

the reality of human history that has to be adapted to a given unalterable philosophical system, but it is philosophy that must incessantly be put to the test of the present—an idea that, some years later, Michel Foucault would develop extensively.

The UNESCO Committee on the Theoretical Bases of Human Rights asked Maritain, alongside many other philosophers and intellectuals coming from various cultural and religious backgrounds, to define the theoretical foundations of human rights and to express their opinion on the actual possibility of reaching a universal agreement on such foundations. It soon became clear that, while the lists of basic values and rights provided were largely similar, the ways of justifying them were extremely different and sometimes even incompatible. In his own answer to UNESCO, Maritain was able to predict such an outcome. He claimed that, in present times, people all over the world largely agree on many 'practical truths concerning their life in common'—truths that, however, are grounded in different and sometimes even opposite theoretical views. And instead of insisting on the fact that the Christian way of justifying them was in his eyes the only one to be correct, Maritain concluded in an extremely pragmatic fashion that the most important thing was to reach a practical agreement on a common formulation of the basic human rights to be granted to every person. According to Maritain, that was indeed possible. On the contrary, it would be vain and even counterproductive to try to reach a theoretical agreement on a common religious, philosophical, or ethical justification of those rights: in so doing, one would risk imposing an arbitrary dogmatism or creating irreconcilable divisions. In other words, only a practical agreement on a universal declaration of human rights was possible: 'We agree about the rights, providing we aren't asked why', Maritain said, since as soon as the question 'Why?' is asked, the dispute begins. However, the social and political value of such a declaration for a just and peaceful post-war international order was so evident for Maritain that he considered a practical agreement to be more than enough.

This doesn't mean that Maritain was ready to give up his own beliefs. He was still convinced that human rights stem from natural law, and thus that they are ultimately granted by God, but he was also keen to reaffirm the historicity and the progressive nature of the human knowledge of such a law. That's why Maritain emphasized that no declaration of human rights could ever be exhaustive and definitive: it needs to be periodically rewritten and updated—an idea that, seventy years after the promulgation of the UDHR, sounds very intriguing to me. In a world that is profoundly different from that of 1948, after 9/11, in the wake of the current migration crisis and the huge comeback of nationalism and racism, it is probably not enough to 'celebrate' the UDHR or even to fight for a wider application of its principles. Why couldn't we also envision a new universal declaration of human rights as a defining task for the beginning of the twenty-first century?

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