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The Malebranche Moment: Selections from the Letters of Étienne Gilson & Henri Gouhier (1920-1936), translated and edited by Richard J. Fafara. Marquette Studies in Philosophy No. 48. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007. 220 pp. \$27 (hb). ISBN-13: 978-087462-671-1 & ISBN-10: 0-87462-671-4.

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The claims made for this slim volume are too modest. According to the back cover publicity, this exchange of letters between a dissertation advisor and his first doctoral student will unveil some fairly basic (perhaps bland) stuff: an advisor's "extraordinary knowledge and intelligence, high standard of scholarship, sense of humor, remarkably distinctive style, and serious Catholicism...the man behind the scholar, hitherto privy only to students and close friends." But this work delivers far more than it promises. For a better appreciation of the book's provocative potential, it must be set in context.

Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) was one of two philosophical icons in the French *renouveau catholique* that flourished from the aftermath of the Great War until about 1960, i.e., the eve of the Second Vatican Council. [1] The other was Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). The two shared a number of traits. Both were heavily immersed in the post-Great War study and promotion of the thought of Thomas Aquinas and hence involved with the officially promulgated "neo-Thomism" of Catholic intellectual life. Yet, their approaches significantly departed from the dry scholasticism taught in seminaries and espoused in Rome, making them appealing and popular figures of "Thomism" both within and beyond the walls of Catholicism. [2]

Moreover, during a period in which Catholic theology and philosophy tended to be dominated by clerics (especially at the Institut Catholique de Paris), Gilson and Maritain were married laymen, on the margins of the ecclesiastical institution, and hence somewhat buffered from disciplinary procedures. In the 1940s, following the Roman church authorities' censure of Dominican Père Marie-Dominique Chenu which prevented him from teaching, Gilson wrote in a letter: "It is a great pity and my heart is bleeding for my friend [Chenu] He is in just the situation where Maritain and I would be, were we priests. God seems to be saving a few laymen to very definite purposes. Let this be off the record." [3]

They also both became genuinely transatlantic figures, spending much of their time from the 1930s onward in North America. In the summer of 1929, Gilson left Paris for the official founding of the Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto, and for much of the remainder of his career he taught half the year in Paris and half in Toronto. In December 1933, he declined an invitation to join the Harvard Philosophy Department (p. 63, n87). Maritain and his wife Raïssa-- a Russian Jewish convert to Catholicism -- took refuge as exiles in New York City for the duration of the Second World War. After the war, Jacques accepted a position at Princeton University and the Maritains remained in the United States.

In the postwar 1950s, both "Thomists" returned to art and aesthetics, topics that had first interested them in their youth. Maritain presented the first A.W. Mellon Lecture in the Fine Arts in 1952 at the National Gallery in Washington, D.C. (published a year later as *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*).

Gilson soon followed suit in 1955, his lectures published in 1957 as *Painting and Reality*. [4] Gilson wrote in a letter: “Jacques [Maritain] has been looking at art. I have been looking at art. Why should anybody be looking at us instead of art itself? Simply because philosophy is about reality, and philosophical lectures are about philosophy. The utter sterility of neoscholastic philosophy during the last fifty years (at least) has no other source.” [5]

Finally, in the end, both Gilson and Maritain suffered the common fate of being eclipsed by the upheaval in Catholicism embodied by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and sealed by the ill-fated papal retrenchment regarding contraception (*Humanae Vitae*, 1968). Medievalism was out, modernism was in, and the chain of memory broken--the end of a world. [6]

Situated within the context of these surface similarities between the two iconic figures as well as a broader habit of imagining Catholic revivalism as a monolithic movement (again the back cover: “serious Catholicism”), Richard Fafara’s small yet densely-packed volume is quietly provocative. The reason is that, for all their similarities, Gilson and Maritain differed significantly, and Fafara’s work--while rarely mentioning Maritain--clarifies the distinction by recovering Gilson’s early years. Gilson regarded himself primarily as a *historian* of philosophical thought rather than a philosopher per se. His approach had been deeply informed by his laicist Sorbonne education which he looked on with affection and esteem. Maritain’s approach, by contrast, was largely shaped as a reaction against his Sorbonne experience. This difference in outlook led Gilson to professorial positions at strongly laicist state institutions, not ecclesiastical ones: the University of Strasbourg (1919-1921), once again in French hands rather than German; to the Sorbonne in the history of philosophy (1921-1932), and to the Collège de France (1932-1951) as first chair-holder in the history of medieval philosophy. He delivered prestigious lectures abroad: the Gifford Lectures at the University of Aberdeen (published as *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* [1931-1932]) and the William James Lectures at Harvard University (published as *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* [1936-1937], the title playing on James’s *Varieties of Religious Experience* [1902]). Finally, in October 1946, he achieved the highest honor of French intellectual life: Elected to membership in the Académie française, Gilson took the chair of Abel Hermant who was expelled after being convicted of wartime collaboration.

As Fafara returns the reader to Gilson at the Sorbonne, first as a student and later as a professor, the intellectual historian’s interests in anti-Aristotelian (and hence anti-Thomistic) thinkers in both the 13th and 17th centuries are brought more clearly into the light. At least one effect of this study is the deconstruction of a stereotyped 20th-century neo-Thomism, one dominated by a caricatured Gilson-Maritain monolith. More broadly, the reader grasps the sources of Gilson’s creative approach to the history of philosophy and his unorthodoxy vis-à-vis both Catholic institutional authorities and philosophical ones. As a result, Gilson’s unique position in the *renouveau catholique* emerges with refreshing clarity.

At the core of Fafara’s volume are thirty-one letters exchanged between Gilson and Henri Gouhier (1898-1994), Gilson’s first doctoral student who eventually became a prolific historian of ideas, especially in the study of such 17th-century figures as René Descartes (1596-1650), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), François Fénelon (1651-1715), and Nicolas de Malebranche (1638-1715). [7] Gouhier’s interest in the age was shaped in part by having chosen the Cartesian Malebranche for his dissertation topic.

In early September 1921, Gilson had just begun his professorial tenure at the Sorbonne (lasting until he was elected to the Collège de France in 1932). Gouhier wrote Gilson asking whether he might suggest possible dissertation topics. Gilson replied with several, the fifth and final being “Malebranche: The Last of the Great Augustinian Scholastics.” Gilson’s explanation of the topic laid bare the connection he perceived between the 13th, 17th, and early 20th centuries, especially the latter’s “Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis” which had reached fever pitch during the decade preceding the Great War [8]: “The resurrection, in the case of Malebranche, of the struggle in the XIIIth century between Aristotelian

Thomism and traditional Augustinianism. There you would have the key to all the instances of *Modernism*, up until Father Bautain and including Father Laberthonnière.” (Gilson to Gouhier, 17 September 1921; p. 25)

Serendipitously, Gilson had written an essay on Malebranche during his doctoral studies (between 1904 and 1907) for a course given by Victor Delbos.[9] Gilson gave this essay (included in Fafara’s volume) the title “La polémique de Malebranche contre l’Aristote et la philosophie scolastique.” Malebranche had followed Descartes in order to construct an Augustinian philosophy that was fiercely anti-Aristotelian (and hence anti-Thomistic). He repeatedly insisted that Aristotle’s philosophy was “barren, obscure, puerile, and even inimical to the Christian faith.” (p. 113) Gilson’s student essay largely aimed at explaining why Malebranche’s reaction to Aristotle was so much more vitriolic than that of Descartes himself. Later in life, Gilson would call Malebranche “the greatest metaphysician France ever produced.”

Eventually, Gouhier did choose Malebranche as his thesis topic, and the letters between the student and his dissertation advisor Gilson, heavily annotated by Fafara, provide access to this “Malebranche Moment.” Something of a potpourri, Fafara’s volume includes (numbers indicate pages):

7-17: Fafara’s introduction situates the letters both philosophically and historically.

19-97: The Gilson-Gouhier letters (7 November 1920 – 30 October 1936) in English translation. Fafara’s abundance of meticulously researched annotations provides a wealth of philosophical and historical context.

99-111: Gilson’s student essay on Malebranche (c. 1904-1907) in English translation.

111-131: Fafara’s commentary on Gilson’s essay; here again, an abundance of philosophical analysis and historical context.

133-135: A brief portrait of Gilson culled from Gouhier’s unpublished personal notebook.

137-182: French texts of the correspondence, Gilson’s essay, and Gouhier’s portrait.

183-210: An extensive bibliography and index.

Illustrations include two facsimiles of letters and several photographs.

Fafara has produced a valuable research tool that will appeal to scholars in at least three fields of interest:

1. EARLY-MODERN PHILOSOPHY AND 17TH-CENTURY STUDIES.

The virulence of Malebranche’s Cartesian anti-Aristotelianism is fascinating, especially given his position as a post-Tridentine Oratorian priest. In his notes to Gouhier, Gilson took pains to underscore Malebranche’s conviction that Aristotelianism was “paganism” and “idolatry.” As Fafara notes, Malebranche echoed Martin Luther’s early-16th-century “war against Aristotle and Rome.” (p. 130) Perhaps this sense of continuity influenced Gilson’s historical perspective articulated in a letter to Gouhier: “to situate Malebranche precisely in history it is necessary to determine the course of the Augustinian movement, the reasons for its existence, if possible, and its true significance. It is the false notion of a break between the XVIIth century and the Middle Ages which makes a man like Malebranche unintelligible. I believe that the history of Augustinian philosophy in France in the

seventeenth century or, at least the part of this movement that immediately affects Malebranche, deserves to be written.” (Gilson to Gouhier, 27 September 1921; p. 30)

The heart of Gilson’s student essay was dedicated to Malebranche’s critique of Aristotelianism’s “preference for the efficacy of secondary causes,” interpreted as transferring a part of the divine power to material objects. “Against all evidence that it is God who acts in everything and everywhere,” wrote the young Gilson, “we concede that bodies really have their own power to act and that they do not cease to exercise it upon us.” As a consequence, we attribute “all the goods we have received from material objects to those objects themselves and not to God who is the one who really sent them to us.” This, concluded Gilson, was “at the very origin of the [Egyptian] idolatry which Cicero mentions” (p. 105) In addition to providing Gilson’s essay in translation, Fafara’s accompanying commentary is admirably lucid: He lays out Malebranche’s problem with substantial forms, his elimination of secondary causality (and, hence, Aristotelian “idolatry”), and his own substituted theory of “occasionalism”—i.e., God acts regularly as the occasion demands (p. 115).

Formed by these reflections in 1904–1907, Gilson wrote insistently to Gouhier nearly two decades later: “Malebranche, precisely as an Augustinian, is an anti-Thomist; he is an Augustinian type of scholastic, exactly like Saint Bonaventure. What is interesting about Malebranche is that, contrary to Descartes, he revives right in the middle of the seventeenth century the Augustinianism of the thirteenth; it is an episode in a secular struggle, which still persists, between two different scholastic orientations.” (Gilson to Gouhier, 27 September 1921; p. 30) Four years later, Gilson reiterated the point more explicitly: “Finally, I think—leaving this up to you—your thesis would gain much in prominence by contrasting very clearly Malebranche and the scholastic Thomists . . . This is stronger in Malebranche, who has complete and terrifying chapters on that which you do not have: scholasticism is idolatry.” (Gilson to Gouhier, 2 June 1925; p. 46)

Gilson’s ongoing fascination with 17th-century thinkers is understandable since the intersections between religion, philosophy, political theory and mathematical science continually surprise. In addition to Malebranche’s embrace of Descartes against Aristotle and Aquinas, his Augustinian affiliations shared with Blaise Pascal (and perhaps Jansenism) and of François Fénelon (and perhaps Quietism) are also intriguing. [10] Yet another fruitful comparison, not noted by Fafara but suggested by J. B. Shank’s work on French receptions of Newtonianism, would be that between Malebranche’s occasionalism and the theological anxieties of his English contemporary, Isaac Newton (1643–1727). [11] As Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs noted in her classic study, Newton wanted, on the one hand, a providential cosmos, not a mechanistic one. On the other hand, his carefully concealed Arian beliefs precluded a God who intervened in everyday causality. [12] For different reasons, then, Augustinianism appealed to both Malebranche and Newton, as well as to Pascal and countless other contemporaries.

2. 19TH-C. NEO-MEDIEVALISM AND 20TH-C. ROMAN CATHOLIC MODERNIST CRISIS.

Although Gilson was popularly seen as a “neo-Thomist” (thanks largely to the successive editions of his 1919 book, *Le Thomisme*), his scholarly interests took him not only ahead to Descartes and Malebranche but also back to Bonaventure (in the line of Augustine), pitting him against Aquinas in a 13th-century struggle between two different scholastic orientations. Fafara observes that, in his work on Bonaventure, “Gilson rejected the idea that Bonaventure and St. Thomas belonged to one and the same family of thinkers who attempted to construct a philosophy standing on its own feet and independent of faith.” Gilson instead opposed Bonaventurism to Thomism, “presenting Bonaventure’s philosophy as Augustinianism,” a “conscious reaction against the heterodox Aristotelianism that had taken root at the Faculty of Arts in Paris.” The 13th-century Augustinians accused Thomism not only of breaking with St. Augustine, “but also of breaking with the Christian tradition by returning to the pagan philosophy of Aristotle” (pp. 127, 128).

Already in the 1920s, then, Gilson explicitly deconstructed the univocal concept of “medieval” philosophy (and “medievalism” in general) that had been established by Leo XIII in 1879 as a bulwark against modernity. [13] Fully in keeping with other 19th-century inventions of tradition, the pope had erased the chasm between 13th-century Augustinian defenders of the tradition against the new Aristotelian upstarts. [14] Leo’s intention was carried forward by Dominican Père Pierre Mandonnet, about whom Gilson wrote: “he maintained that there had been one philosopher and one philosophy worthy of the name, St. Thomas Aquinas, O.P., and Thomistic philosophy . . . So the Christian middle ages had one philosopher, but only one” (p. 66, n.94) Gilson’s historical attention to the actual 13th-century situation rendered Aquinas’s opponents visible again in the postwar period. Consequently, his sympathetic reading of those associated with Roman Catholic Modernism (like Loisy) might be attributed to viewing the crisis as George Tyrrell had seen it in 1908— i.e., as a revolt against an oppressively a-historical conception of “medievalism.” [15]

3. GILSON’S DISTINCTIVE ROLE IN THE POSTWAR *RENOUVEAU CATHOLIQUE*.

Gilson’s teachers at the Sorbonne included Léon Brunschvig, Victor Delbos, Émile Durkheim and, most importantly, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, his doctoral advisor. Lévy-Bruhl was a powerful activist force in the laicist positivism that dominated both the Sorbonne and the Third Republic. [16] However, Gilson did not share the negative spin given the Sorbonne by Charles Péguy, by “Agathon” (the pseudonym of Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde) who produced *L’Esprit de la nouvelle Sorbonne* (1911), or by Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, whose mutual suicide pact in 1901 was agreed upon as a desperate response to their positivist Sorbonne education (pp. 9-10). [17]

Even more striking, the years during which Gilson produced his student essay on Malebranche (1904-1907) are contemporaneous with three noteworthy events: the high-water mark of the anti-clerical laws of the Radical government (1901-1905), culminating in the Act of Separation of Church and State (December 1905); the Maritains’ 1906 conversion to Catholicism under the tutelage of Léon Bloy (1846-1917); and the 1907 climax of the Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis. [18] Even if Gilson and Maritain had not differed in their approaches as historian and philosopher respectively, their radically different responses to their Sorbonne years tell us why their paths would diverge. One small but significant episode captures the distinction: Maritain had obtained his professorial position at the Institut Catholique largely thanks to anti-Modernist Roman authorities rewarding his attack on his former mentor, Henri Bergson. This was an action that, even a half-century later, Gilson would never be able to condone. [19]

Although Lévy-Bruhl (in Gilson’s account) had “never opened one of the works of Saint Thomas and never intended to,” he nevertheless recommended that Gilson work backward by studying Descartes’s scholastic background. (p. 9) In this way, Gilson backed into his study of the Middle Ages as a means of understanding his 17th-century subject. Fafara’s exposition of the context in which Gilson was educated demonstrates why he would eventually play such a significant role in postwar Catholic revivalism, while at the same time remaining a creatively unpredictable figure in that movement. As even a cursory glance at Gilson’s publications between 1919 and 1930 shows, his research interests alternated between the 13th-century Augustinian “scholastics” on the one hand and the 17th-century ones on the other. Meanwhile, he returned over and over again to revisions of *Le Thomisme*. It served as a fulcrum, a pivot point between the 13th- and 17th-century Augustinians. [20]

A decade ago, Wayne Hankey concluded that, in light of better appreciations of the neo-Platonist sources of Aquinas’s metaphysics, “Gilson’s Thomism is past, being sustainable neither historically nor philosophically.” Following this lead, Denis Bradley has written that Hankey’s provocative judgments “call for some considered response from Gilsonians, who tend to spend too much time rehearsing the jejune neo-Thomist debates of the last century. Doubtless Gilson, if he were still with us, would

respond . . . : his continuous engagement with contemporary intellectual life is what made him more than just a ‘historian.’” [21] Fafara’s *Malebranche Moment* is a welcome response to that call, its modest claims and appearance notwithstanding. It is to be hoped that this moment will be followed soon by others.

NOTES

[1] When Gilson’s *Le philosophe et la théologie* “appeared early in 1960 it was not received well by the new pre-conciliar theologians.” Laurence K. Shook, *Étienne Gilson* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1984), 347.

[2] Gilson’s *Le Thomisme: Introduction à la philosophie de saint Thomas d’Aquin* first appeared in 1919; Maritain’s *Art et scolastique* in 1920. Subsequent modifications and editions of Gilson’s work appeared in 1922, 1927, 1929, 1942, 1944, and 1956, with the final sixth edition appearing in 1965. This final edition has been translated into English and recently published as *Thomism: The Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002). For an account of the a-historical character of Roman fundamental theology and the Thomism practiced in Rome, see Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

[3] Letter of Gilson to Anton Pegis (1 April 1947); in Shook, 276; quoted p.81, n.128.

[4] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York: Pantheon Books [The A. W. Mellon lectures in the fine arts, 1, 1952; Bollingen series, 35.1], 1953); Étienne Gilson, *Painting and Reality* (New York: Pantheon Books [The A. W. Mellon lectures in the fine arts, 4, 1955; Bollingen series, 35.4], 1957). For the historical context of this curious postwar Franco-American convergence of Catholicism and the art world, see Sheila Nowinski, “Creating Rouault’s Legacy, 1945-1965: Commander in the Légion d’honneur, Artist of Catholic Modernity,” in *Mystic Masque: Semblance and Reality in Georges Rouault, 1871-1958*, edited by Stephen Schloesser (Chestnut Hill: McMullen Museum of Art; distributed by the University of Chicago Press, 2008), 399-409.

[5] Letter of Gilson to Gerard Phelan (16 November 1957); in Shook, 338.

[6] See Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, translated by Simon Lee (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000); and Hervieu-Léger, *Catholicisme: la fin d’un monde* (Paris: Bayard, 2003).

[7] See for example: Henri Gouhier, *La pensée religieuse de Descartes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924); Gouhier, *La philosophie de Malebranche et son expérience religieuse* [Thèse – Université de Paris] (Paris: J. Vrin, 1926; see also 2nd edition, 1948); Gouhier, *Malebranche* (Paris: J. Gabalda et fils, 1929); Gouhier, *Essais sur Descartes* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1949); Gouhier, *Blaise Pascal, commentaires par Henri Gouhier* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1966); Gouhier, *Pascal et les humanistes chrétiens; l’affaire Saint-Ange* (Paris: J. Vrin., 1974); Gouhier, *Fénelon philosophe* (Paris: Vrin, 1977); Gouhier, *Cartésianisme et augustinisme au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1978). Gouhier’s *Les premières pensées de Descartes; contribution à l’histoire de l’Anti-Renaissance* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1958) might profitably be read along with Stephen Toulmin’s account of the 17th century as a “Counter-Renaissance” in *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

[8] Fafara notes that, in 1919, Gilson favorably reviewed two books by Alfred Loisy, the archetypal Roman Catholic Modernist. (Loisy had been dismissed as a professor from the Institut Catholique de Paris in 1893; Roman authorities condemned his books and he was excommunicated in 1908.) Fafara also notes that “Gilson felt that his friend Abbé Laberthonnière, though in philosophical error, deserved,

at most, a sympathetic reprimand by the Church instead of having several of his books placed on the *Index*, ‘followed by the cruel interdiction to teach and to publish.’” Ultimately, Gilson became critical of Pius X, the fiercely anti-Modernist pope who reigned from 1903 to 1914. See Fafara, 26n18.

[9] Victor Delbos (1862-1916), a philosopher and historian of philosophy, spent his entire career from 1902 onward teaching at the Sorbonne. In 1911 he was made a member of l’Académie des sciences morales et politiques which, since 2002, has awarded a biennial prize in Delbos’s name recognizing recipients who study and promote “spiritual life and religious philosophy.” In 1912, an article in *The New York Times* entitled “French Catholic Revival. Marked Reaction Toward the Church Has Set In” (June 23) observed: “At the Sorbonne the students in philosophy have chosen for professor a Catholic, Victor Delbos.” His sudden and unexpected death in the middle of the Great War left colleagues and students bereft. He was also survived by his daughter, Claire (1906-1959), a violinist who would eventually marry the composer Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992) in 1932. Delbos’s *Étude de la philosophie de Malebranche*, posthumously published in 1924, assisted Gouhier in his dissertation research. (Fafara 29, 124-125) See Joannès Wehrlé, *Victor Delbos: membre de l’Institut, professeur de philosophie à la Sorbonne* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1932); from the series “Les Maîtres d’une génération.”

[10] Gilson was not alone in looking back to the 17th century for alternatives to the Catholic status quo. Between 1909 and 1910, Henri Bremond was producing the articles that would become his re-evaluation of Fénelon, a prelude to his magisterial eleven-volume *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu’à nos jours* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1916-33). See C. J. T. Talar, “Prayer at Twilight: Henri Bremond’s *Apologie pour Fénelon*,” *Modernists & Mystics*, edited by Talar (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 39-61.

[11] See entries for both Malebranche and “Malebranche circle” in J.B. Shank, *The Newton Wars & the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[12] Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs has drawn attention to this widespread 17th-century intellectual problem: “The distinction between natural and miraculous events was precisely what Newton wanted to avoid by returning to a more Augustinian position . . . Unlike Augustine, the proponents of the new science in the seventeenth century were keenly aware of natural law, and the balance between natural and miraculous had shifted so far toward the natural that the miraculous was virtually excluded. Some in fact denied even the possibility of miracle, and along that path loomed the twin specters of deism and atheism. Newton’s position would have resurrected the sacramental view of the whole order of creation: everything that happens is both natural and miraculous.” Dobbs, *The Janus Faces of Genius: The Role of Alchemy in Newton’s Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 232, 233.

[13] Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), mandating the teaching and promulgation of Neoscholasticism throughout the Catholic world, quoted his post-Tridentine predecessor Sixtus V (1520-1590): “By the divine favor...there was founded by Our fathers, men of eminent wisdom, the scholastic theology, which two glorious doctors in particular angelic St. Thomas and the seraphic St. Bonaventure, illustrious teachers of this faculty . . . with surpassing genius, by unwearied diligence, and at the cost of long labors and vigils, set in order and beautified, and when skillfully arranged and clearly explained in a variety of ways, handed down to posterity.” However, Aquinas was singled out as preeminent: “Among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all towers Thomas Aquinas, who, as [Cardinal Tomasso] Cajetan [1469-1534] observes, because ‘he most venerated the ancient doctors of the Church, in a certain way seems to have inherited the intellect of all.’” (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/leo_xiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris_en.html , accessed 22 January 2010)

[14] See Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 14, 27-28, 33-34.

[15] George Tyrrell, *Medievalism: A Reply to Cardinal Mercier* (London/New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908). Tyrrell (1861-1909) was a Jesuit priest until his expulsion in 1906. Having been suspended from the sacraments in 1907, he died in 1909 at the age of 48. By means of Victor Delbos, Gilson would also have had the personal connection to another Modernist figure, Maurice Blondel, to whom Delbos's philosophical papers were entrusted after his death. Delbos considered Blondel's philosophy of moral and religious action as "the only possible solution to the question of the relationship between philosophy and theology." (Fafara, 125) For Blondel and the Modernists, see Michael J. Kerlin, "Blondel and Pragmatism: Truth as the Real Adequation of Mind and Life," *The Reception of Pragmatism in France & the Rise of Roman Catholic Modernism, 1890-1914*, edited by David G. Schultenover (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 122-142.

[16] For Lévy-Bruhl, see Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism*, 25-26, 56, 224, 229, 337nn33, 34, 35, 338nn36, 37.

[17] On the Sorbonne, see Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism*, 69-61, 77-78.

[18] For the chronological conjunction of the French anti-clerical laws (1901-1905) and the papal anti-Modernist campaign (especially 1903-1907), see Stephen Schloesser, "Vivo ergo cogito. Modernism as Temporalization and Its Discontents," in *The Reception of Pragmatism in France*, cited, 21-58, at 46-47. See also Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism*, 53-56; for Maritains' baptism, 71.

[19] "Re Jacques Maritain, the truth is that what he has written has played no part at all in my intellectual history. Were I to get started on him, for whom I have a brotherly affection, I would have to raise problems better left untouched. I thought the few things I said about him in [the chapter on] 'L'art d'être thomiste' would suffice to make it impossible to ascribe to me any unfriendly feelings about him. Still, there is one thing that cannot be done: to condone his book on Bergson . . . There would be no problem if Maritain didn't wield Thomism like a bludgeon . . . I have never had to take Maritain's positions into account until recently in *Painting and Reality*. The result is that I have been expelled from earthly paradise by an angel of wrath [i.e., Raïssa Maritain] who is especially charged to protect by flame and sword the truth about poetry." Letter of Gilson to Anton Pegis (7 December 1959); in Shook, 346. For Maritain's 1913 attack on Bergson and consequent appointment to the Institut Catholique, see Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism*, 80-81.

[20] Étienne Gilson, *La philosophie au moyen âge. I, De Scot Erigène à S. Bonaventure* (Paris: Payot, 1922); Gilson, *La philosophie de saint Bonaventure* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1924); Gilson, *Descartes et la métaphysique scolastique positions des six leçons professées à l'université libre de Bruxelles* (Bruxelles: M. Weissenbruch, 1924); Gilson, *René Descartes - Discours de la méthode. Texte et commentaire* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1925); Gilson, *Pourquoi Saint Thomas a critiqué Saint Augustin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1926); Gilson, *Avicenne et le point de départ de Duns Scot* (Toulouse: Orient, 1927); Gilson, *Introduction à l'étude de saint Augustin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1929); Gilson, *Recherches sur la formation du système cartésien* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1929); Gilson, *Les sources gréco-arabes de l'Augustinisme avicennisant* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1930); Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* (Lille: Desclée, De Brouwer et Cie; Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1930); Gilson, *Réflexions sur la controverse: St Thomas-St. Augustin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1930).

[21] Wayne Hankey, "Denys and Aquinas: Antimodern cold and postmodern hot," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, edited by Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (London/New York: Routledge, 1998), 139-84, at 147. Denis Bradley, review of *A Thomistic Tapestry: Essays in Memory of Etienne Gilson*, edited by Peter A. Redpath (Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi, 2003), for Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews (11 September 2003; <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=1336>, accessed 22 January 2010)

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Etienne Gilson was a strong promoter of the notion of a "Christian philosophy". He viewed it as a type of historical practice whereby Christian thinkers are spurred by revelation to develop philosophical positions congruent with revelation, but which are defensible by reason alone. 31 Henri Gouhier, 'Etiennne Gilson, Discours de Henri Gouhier (15 fev 1979 a l'Academie Francsais)', La documentation catholique, 1784 (20 avril 1980), p. 371; see also Gouhier, Etiennne Gilson, Trois essais, pp. 68-69. See Gilson La notion de la philosophie chre'tienne, p. 42. Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, p. 485. When discussing St. Bonaventure, whom Gilson likened to Malebranche, Gilson commented: '[N]o doubt sentiments are not doctrines, but it happens that they engender doctrines'. The Malebranche Moment: Selections from the Letters of Etienne Gilson and Henri Gouhier (1920-1936). << Previous Article. >> Next Article. Already a subscriber or member? Open this document. Not yet a subscriber or member? Subscribe or join here.