
JACQUES MARITAIN'S NEO-THOMIST CONCEPT OF EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING

**Kuralay Bolysova¹, Sayana Rakimzhanova^{2*}, Farida Razakhova³,
Marzhan Toleuova⁴, Almasbek Shagyrbay⁵ and Rustem Shichiyakh⁶**

¹ *Astana International University, Kazakhstan*

² *S. Seifullin Kazakh Agrotechnical Research University, Kazakhstan*

³ *West Kazakhstan Innovative Technological University, Kazakhstan*

⁴ *Karaganda Technical University, Kazakhstan*

⁵ *Institute of Philosophy, Political Science and Religious Studies by the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan*

⁶ *Kuban State Agrarian University named after I.T. Trubilin, Russian Federation*

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Abstract

The article introduces Jacques Maritain's neo-Thomist concept of education based on the ideas of integral Christian humanism. It is shown that the philosophical and theological understanding of the human personality by Maritain provides a holistic vision of the goals of education, covering the physical, intellectual, moral, social, and religious dimensions of development. The study utilized the methods of qualitative literature analysis and expert evaluation of the selected sources. The results indicate that Maritain's ideas about the desire to 'awaken the human in man' and achieve the inner freedom of the individual through the unity of knowledge, virtue, and faith can serve as a basis for overcoming modern crisis trends in education and for the development of a holistic humanistic concept of education.

Keywords: integral humanism, Christian humanism, neo-Thomism, philosophy of education, personhood, virtue ethics

1. Introduction

The gap between religious and secular worldviews has led to unilateralism in education and a spiritual crisis of personality. In 'Integral Humanism', Jacques Maritain gave a brilliant diagnosis of modernity, which covers, among other things, the field of education and upbringing. Maritain responded to this challenge by developing the concept of 'integral humanism' – a Christian-philosophical synthesis designed to restore an integral understanding of man in education.

Modern pedagogical trends, attitudes, and methods of education become more understandable if, following Maritain's proposal, we pay attention to the process of transition from theocentric (Christian) humanism to anthropocentric humanism, which began at the end of the Middle Ages. According to Maritain,

* rahimzhanova.82@mail.ru

“...The collapse of the Middle Ages opens (...) the door to a new humanism. The majestic decomposition of the Middle Ages and their sacred forms is the emergence of a ‘secular’ civilization – not just secular, but one that is moving further and further away from the Incarnation. It is still, if you will, the age of the Son of Man, but man moves from the cult of a man God, the cult of the Word that created man, to the cult of Humanity, the pure Man” [1, p.95].

Maritain argues that the anthropocentric humanism that arose with the birth of the Renaissance and Reformation was aimed at the rehabilitation of creation and man. As a result, this trend led to God being ‘removed’ from the center of the cosmos, replaced by man. Human mentality and attitudes became increasingly anthropological. This type of humanism has different varieties. Their common ground is the understanding of man as a purely natural being, divorced from the supernatural order, not influenced by sin or grace. On the other hand, most proponents of this concept of man retain in their vision some substitutes for connections with supernatural reality, which most often lead to pseudo-religion [1].

Notably, Maritain developed his integral humanism in dialogue with the ideas of Russian religious philosophy. It has been noted that the legacy of V. Solovyov and other Russian thinkers, passed on by N. Berdyaev, significantly influenced the development of Maritain’s views. This emphasizes the intercultural nature of his concept, as it combines the Western Thomist tradition with the Eastern Christian experience.

Maritain’s philosophical works, reflections on the Christian faith in the alarming interwar period and on the fate of European humanism, were greatly influenced by the events that unfolded in Russia, namely the civil war and the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church and the contribution of Russian emigration to the development of Europe, particularly such philosophers as Nikolai Berdyaev (with whom Maritain worked closely), Sergey Bulgakov, and Lev Shestov. The foreign cultural path was seen by Maritain as a possible indication of the cultural misconceptions of Western Europe itself, a way to overcome the crisis of European modern thought, and a warning against the dangers that an emerging totalitarian regime could bring. Moreover, Maritain studied the crisis of the New Age, including education, relying on the questions posed by Berdyaev in the same period in works published in France with Maritain’s help: ‘Le Destin de la culture’ (‘The Destiny of Culture’) and ‘A New Middle Ages’ [2].

Observing the fate of human society and the history of thought, Maritain speaks of the tragedy of humanism in three dimensions: man, culture, and God. Human tragedy is expressed in successive reductionisms. The first was biologism, based on Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. In this theory, humans emerge only as a result of the evolutionary process. Another reductionist theory was the psychologism of Sigmund Freud, in which the human person is the result of the action of unconscious drives. The third reductionism, tragic for our time, was the sociology of Karl Marx, which resulted in the tragic events in Russia. In this theory, the weak human individual no longer makes any claims to subjectivity and

sovereignty, 'renouncing' and abandoning their own self in favor of a collective person.

Maritain also believes that the tragedy of culture unfolded in three stages. At the first stage, the order of the goals was reversed. Culture began to look for its primary purpose in itself and became autothelic. Gradually, the main goal came to be the domination of man over matter. The mastery of external nature replaced the desire to improve the nature of man through the "internal improvement of a certain wisdom of knowledge and life" [1, p.95]. Natural and technical sciences came to the fore, providing tools that could increase the sense of security and possession of goods. At the third stage, Maritain could already observe the suppression of the human essence by matter. By neglecting the laws of nature and the laws of his personal existence, man paradoxically increasingly subordinates himself to material needs. This is a reduced, 'materialized' person subject to the laws of the material world, over which he no longer has any power.

Thus, Maritain believes that anthropocentric humanism contributed to the destruction of the idea of God, which, breaking away from Revelation, begins to share the fate of culture. At the beginning of the New Age, God became the guarantor of the truth of knowledge and the effectiveness of action (R. Descartes). Then the Idea becomes immanent to nature – this is the God of idealistic metaphysics. The last stage in the fate of the idea of God is the proclamation of His death and the declaration of the absolute domination of matter, which acquires the features of the absolute (L. Feuerbach, F. Nietzsche, and K. Marx) [1, p.97].

This humanism, according to Maritain, also deformed the education system, which relied on the erroneous theory of man. The resulting educational goals ultimately limit the full development of the human personality.

The purpose of this article was to analyze the neo-Thomist philosophy of education by Maritain and show how the principles of integral humanism lying at its core can help solve modern pedagogical problems. To achieve this goal, we consecutively investigated (1) Maritain's Christian-humanistic understanding of the personality and (2) the tasks of education arising from it, from physical and intellectual development to moral, social, and religious upbringing.

2. Methods

The methodology of the study was interdisciplinary: philosophical analysis was combined with a theological approach, which aligns with the modern approach of including the value-worldview dimension in the study of humanitarian concepts. This approach avoids a narrowly positivist framework and considers the specifics of neo-Thomist philosophy, where the rational and the spiritual are interconnected.

A qualitative study of the neo-Thomist concept of education and upbringing by Maritain, using the methods of literature analysis and an expert survey to assess the reliability of the selected sources.

The method of literature analysis makes it possible to collect a wide range of information in conditions when facing a multitude of different assessments and opinions. At the first stage, articles and monographs on the philosophical concepts

of Maritain were selected, mainly from peer-reviewed sources. Given the limitations of the literature review (the quality, completeness, and subjectivity of sources), at the second stage, the expert survey was conducted with 11 specialists, each having at least three publications on the topic in Scopus or Web of Science journals. Experts were emailed with a request to assess the reliability of the selected materials according to the specified criteria. As a result of the survey, the selected literature received high reliability ratings, which allowed us to confidently use it in further work.

At the third stage of the study, Maritain's Christian humanistic concept of the human person was analyzed based on the selected literature, followed by an analysis of the concept of education and upbringing according to Maritain on this basis.

3. Results

3.1. Maritain's Christian humanist concept of human personality

Maritain's concept of education hinges on the Christian humanistic concept of the human person. According to Maritain, only classical philosophy and Christian religion can provide a complete, holistic vision of the human person. Philosophy is indispensable because the subject of its reflection is, among other things, the essence of man. Religion, on the other hand, is essential because it is shaped by the way of understanding the existence of man as a being that is open to the supernatural and achieves the full realization of their existence in God.

In Maritain's concept, man is a corporal being that possesses a physical body and obeys the laws of nature, but man does not exist simply as a physical entity, since he possesses an existence that is infinitely richer and more noble, a kind of 'spiritual superexistence', which is the source of knowledge and love [3].

Reflections on man as a learning being are one of the main themes of classical human philosophy. Different ideas about this basic human activity are also the source of later discrepancies in the understanding of the educational process. Knowledge distinguishes man from all other beings. In a sense, being part of the universe, through knowledge, man becomes everything. In this way, man is a microcosm that, through knowledge, can cover the entire universe. Only the human person is capable of this, and only they can build such a bridge between themselves and the world. Knowledge is an activity in which "things are spiritualized to cooperate with the spirit" [4, p.72]. A human person can function in this way when they are appropriately gifted and equipped to learn reality. Maritain remains faithful to the Thomist concept of cognitive ability. On the one hand, he opposes nativism, pointing to the origins of cognition and emphasizing the role of feelings; on the other, he polemicizes with empiricism, stressing the role of intelligence, both theoretical and practical. He attaches more importance to the former type, which knows for the sake of knowledge, while the second knows in order to act. Loyal to Aristotle, Maritain argues that "contemplation itself is better than action and more consistent with what is spiritual in man" [4, p.86]. Knowledge is also the basis for the action of the human person.

The power that enables man to act is will. Here, Maritain refers not to the denial of instincts, the basic tendencies of the body, and its needs. The intellect that enlightens the will leads the person to accept their animal origin in the way that is characteristic of man. While instincts and drives lock him in, the will, on the contrary, encourages man to 'freely give himself to other people'. Will is not only a 'decision center', but also the 'power of love' that manifests itself in action. Love implies freedom and selflessness. Possessing intelligence and will, the person can be the creator of free actions not dictated by either instinct or social environment. The freedom of human will is not the unrestricted freedom of an imaginary superhuman being, but freedom conditioned and determined by goodness, moral law, and the common good. The most basic form of freedom is inner freedom [5, p.42].

The 'root' of knowledge and love is the human soul. Maritain writes, "There is a soul in the flesh and bones of man that is worth more than the entire physical universe. This is because it can know the whole universe, go beyond time and space" [5, p.51]. Through the soul, man is 'introduced' into another world, from which he draws his unique dignity. "Man has absolute dignity because he is in direct connection with the realm of being, truth, goodness, beauty, and with God; it is only through this that he can achieve full realization. His spiritual part rests in the order of things that have absolute value and which, somehow reflecting in themselves the divine Absolute, superior to the world, possess the ability to be attracted to this Absolute" [cit. ex. 6, p.404].

The human being is also the body. The body and soul form the substantive unity of man, endowed with the properties of completeness and independence. The person consisting of spirit and body is themselves a microcosm. This property becomes even more pronounced when, through action, man forces the universe to be present within himself. Man is so closely connected with the world by his existence that he ends up being separated from it at the same time. Man exists independently of the world and transcends it. Despite existing in the world and being connected to it, man does not identify with it and is superior to his surroundings. Maritain distinguishes between two poles of human existence: 'personality' and 'individuality'. The foundation of the first is the human soul. The second is tied to the material dimension of personality [7].

At the heart of Christian civilization and its humanistic philosophy of education lies the Christian concept of the human person. Combining these three great inspirations, Maritain defines the human person as follows: "Man is an intelligent being whose highest dignity derives from this very name. At the same time, he is a free being in his personal relationship with God, whose supreme 'justice' or righteousness lies in the voluntary and willing observance of God's law. Further, man is a sinful and wounded being called to divine life, to the freedom of grace, the highest perfection of which is based on love" [cit. ex. 8, p.51]. In a different passage, he adds: "the Christian understanding of man does not present him as a purely natural being, it looks at him as a natural and supernatural being, carrying in himself the pathetic wounds of Adam and the holy wounds of the Savior" [cit. ex. 8, p.54]. That is why the person cannot achieve their personal fullness, that is, perfection, when they are limited by the natural

dimension. They are called upon to go beyond this dimension and are built in a way that they can fully realize themselves in the supernatural dimension. Education is intended to empower the person and equip them with competencies that will help them achieve excellence in both dimensions.

Thus, Maritain proceeds from the idea of the human person as a spiritual-corporal being, whose soul has absolute dignity, elevating them above the material world. The fullness of the person's existence is revealed only in interaction with the Divine essence. Therefore, education, according to Maritain, should help the person realize themselves not only in the natural but also in the supernatural dimension. In other words, the purpose of education is to assist man in realizing the 'image of God', his highest spiritual nature.

3.2. Educational process and educational objectives in the neo-Thomist concept of education and upbringing by Maritain

According to Maritain, education is 'the awakening of the human in man'. This is a process in which the person receives help that allows them to fully realize themselves. 'Upbringing' means "to form a specific child belonging to a given nation, a given social environment, at a given historical moment, so that they can achieve the complete human form" [cit. ex. 9, p.377].

The most critical dimension of the 'human' in a person is their inner freedom. Therefore, the educational process should be aimed at the liberation of man "through knowledge and wisdom, goodwill and love" [cit. ex. 9, p.379]. This allows the person to develop, improve – engage in self-education. This fundamental goal entails other, secondary, but no less important goals. These include the transfer of cultural heritage and preparation for life in society, family, and state. The principal goal in the process of education remains the same; only the content and scope of secondary goals are subject to change.

The main goal of education requires considering many aspects of the educational process related to specific areas of human development: physical education, intellectual education, moral upbringing, social education, and religious upbringing.

1. Physical education. Physicality and spirituality are two dimensions of the same human existence. The proper functioning of the mental sphere relates to the respective physical condition, including the good functioning of the senses. At the heart of all knowledge lies the sensory perception of reality. Intelligence, based on sensations and sensory images, creates abstract and universal concepts. Maritain states, "Thomist philosophy stresses the importance of nurturing feelings (perception and memory at the same time) and emphasizes a direct, experienced approach to reality, but provided that all this is aimed at awakening intellectual abilities and developing feelings of truth" [cit. ex. 10, p.246]. For example, the person's hands, according to Maritain, participate not only in action but also in the cognition of the world. Their activities are also of great importance in the process of upbringing. In almost all areas of development, "hands and spirit cooperate in common work" [cit. ex. 10, p.248].

2. *Intellectual education.* In this sphere of development, the goal is to 'realize' the person as a rational being. Moreover, Maritain argues that the person is most fully realized as a rational being in contact with reality. The purpose of the educational process, therefore, is to form a person as one that is open to existence. Not to ideas, as in intellectualism, or to experience, as in empiricism, or to detailed and practical knowledge, as in instrumentalism, but to 'living reality', the actual existence. The mind thus formed becomes able to perceive existence and finds joy in cognition. Thus, one of the specific tasks of intellectual education is to develop a realistic attitude in its classical sense.

On the other hand, in human cognition, we are dealing with 'inward movement'. The things that are known become the property of intelligence. The subject merges with the known; they become one while also maintaining their individuality and remaining themselves. Cognition enriches the subject, changes the way they exist, and through the act of cognition, they begin to 'spiritually superexist' [11, p.422].

Cognition has three elements that are important for development and education: openness, presence, and existence. Therefore, the more complete and thorough the knowledge of reality, i.e., the richer the person's contact with the world, the more optimal the development of the personality will be [12]. Knowledge, meaning approaching reality and achieving truth, according to Maritain, is a source of a sense of freedom, inner liberation, and joy.

Maritain believes that with the advent and development of anthropocentric humanism, the integrally understood development of intelligence was destroyed. Gradually, it became limited to the content of learning from the realm of special sciences (natural and humanities) and ultimately to logical-mathematic, natural science, and technical content. Vast areas of reality and types of knowledge important to man, including knowledge based on wisdom, remained outside the scope of education. The lack of this knowledge became the cause of the deformation of education in other areas as well [13].

For this reason, intellectual education should assist in independently discovering the truth and in aligning one's life with it. Educational impacts are only complete when they provide the person with the tools to fully experience reality. Intellectual education is supposed to prepare the person to use all their intellectual abilities in a truly free way. Such education should also be free of two restricting illusions: positivist and idealistic [14].

The first type of wisdom the person can achieve is metaphysical wisdom. Its essence is to awaken an understanding of existence, intuition, and 'vision' in the person, that is, to give them the opportunity to learn the basic metaphysical truths. Education is intended to develop a set of abilities that will allow the student to know and understand existence [15].

One of the important existential consequences of this effort is the creation of connectedness and 'firmness' of existence, the discovery of the meaning of one's own life and the meaning of the existence of all being. The formation of such an attitude gives the student a feeling of confidence, which frees them from skepticism and the constant fluidity of sensual impressions. This is an introduction

to the basic experience aimed at finding a fixed point, the ‘depth’ of what exists, an experience that carries with it the need for constant ‘immersion in existence’.

Acquiring this type of wisdom is not just a matter of intelligence. The constant and unselfish search for truth requires the assistance of the will. It keeps the mind active, clearing it of anything that might be the source of easier solutions that falsify reality. Through intellectual education, the teacher leads the student to wisdom, which in the natural order “in itself has the highest value for the human spirit” [16, p.110]. This wisdom transcends knowledge in its current sense; it is an intellectual view of reality in its fundamental dimensions. Created based on experience, it has a contemplative nature and is associated with the lifestyle and actions of the person. Philosophical wisdom belongs to the natural order, but it represents the basis upon which the supernatural order can be reached. In the latter case, there is theological and mystical wisdom in which man is endowed in various ways with the knowledge possessed by God. Intellectual education, like other aspects of education, is intended to help people open up to the supernatural [17].

Modern researchers note that Maritain’s warnings about the unilateralism of education sound more relevant today than ever. The factual restriction of curricula to technocratic and utilitarian disciplines has led to the loss of ‘metaphysical wisdom’ and impoverished students’ worldview. According to Maritain, full-fledged intellectual education should return to the person their ability to a holistic cognition of existence, which gives inner freedom and joy from comprehending the truth.

3. Moral upbringing. Maritain suggests that morality is not one of the spheres of human education but a form that organizes the entire process of education, since the essence of morality is a constant comparison of ‘what will be’ at the moment with what ‘should be’. What should be, that is, the goals and objectives of education and the hierarchy of values and norms inscribed in them, organizes the whole process and defines the essence of education, which is penetration into nature through culture [18].

Moral upbringing is also called freedom education. “To teach freedom is to teach how to be aware of one’s own capabilities and to constantly compare one’s behavior with the truth that sets one free. Moral upbringing means learning freedom, improving the ability to make free decisions, and developing the ability to make the right choices” [cit. ex. 19, p.92]. The person deserves, as Maritain says, to be a person making the right choice, i.e., bringing good.

Maritain cites two classical understandings of freedom. The first is related to the existential structure of man, in which will exists as a force through which the person can choose and decide, i.e., be a leader. The ‘heart of personality’ is subjective freedom, ‘because to say personality is to say independence’. The second meaning, one might say functional, is associated with the act of choice, direct implementation, and the act of will. Between these two extremes, between one and the other meaning of will, ‘stands’ the process of nurture, which is the construction of inner freedom, going from possibility to realization. The realization of freedom of choice is not an end in itself, but a means by which the person achieves true inner freedom, independence, spontaneity, and autonomy.

Thus, human will be formed as “the ability to act by the force of one’s inner attraction, not succumbing to the pressure of an external agent” [cit. ex. 20, p.87].

Educational work aimed at the formation of human freedom, independence, and spontaneity is of integrative importance. Maritain emphasizes that in the process of upbringing, it is important not to distract the child by external life, by many erratic desires, but to help them deepen and combine desires and aspirations, to discover those fundamental inclinations that allow the child to spiritually grow [14].

The asceticism offered by integral humanism is not one of destruction and slaughter but a culture of choice. It speaks not about emphasizing emotionality, but about combining it with reason, so that drives and emotions are given the proper limit, and they are subordinated to the principles that govern the life of the human person.

Moral upbringing cannot boil down only to the transmission of moral principles, their interiorization, bringing them to consciousness, etc. The primary task of the teacher is to build the virtue of prudence, that is, the ability to manage one’s life. The virtue of prudence naturally unifies our moral life. It is “the virtue of prudence that makes the action right... to lead, because it is the measure of our actions in relation to the ultimate goal, which is God himself, beloved in the greatest and most unique way” [cit. ex. 21, p.222].

Prudence is associated with three other basic virtues: justice, courage, and moderation. They form a kind of circle expressing the unity of man’s life, where one cannot be prudent without being fair, ascetic, and courageous. On a supernatural level, all these virtues are animated by love – the first of three theological virtues. Maritain asserts that the fullness of moral life lies in love. Moral upbringing supports the development of personality and the acquisition of internal freedom, which becomes the center of the human personality. The essence of freedom is love. Love also gives full form to human existence and defines its perfection. The main intellectual virtue, wisdom, also entails the same. God’s love is of the greatest value for the human person and their complete development. It is “the free discovery of the fullness of the love of the living God, which descends upon us and fills us to make us his successors in his work and partakers in his goodness” [cit. ex. 21, p.226].

Both virtues, prudence and love, help the person accept life despite all its hardships, sufferings, and paradoxes. Maritain emphasizes the need to encourage the student and develop a positive attitude towards life: “I would describe these attitudes as the attitude of a being who exists voluntarily and for whom existence and the acceptance of its natural limitations are the object of consent, as simple as it is free and pure” [cit. ex. 12].

Maritain also stresses that the moral dimension permeates the entire educational process, since true freedom is inseparable from the truth of good. He strongly rejects moral relativism, asserting the objectivity of norms and responsibilities rooted in the human mind. Accordingly, ‘teaching freedom’ means teaching to align one’s actions with the objective truth and good. Freedom of will, according to Maritain, is possible only if the universal moral law and the Supreme Good are followed. In other words, without a universal law, there can be

no truly free choice. It is loyalty to the moral law that allows the person to realize their dignity by making the 'right choice' and asserting themselves as a person.

4. *Social education.* Humans are not only individual but also social beings. The human person is connected to others through knowledge and love. Society is natural for a person, not so much in the biological sense as in relation to their spiritual nature and its manifestations, especially reason and will. Therefore, socialization is primarily an ethical and religious fact, and only then an economic, political, and legal one. The social world is governed not just by legal but also by moral order. Maritain refers here to the creative act of God, as well as to human origins, both physical and spiritual, which are ruled not by law but by love and giving [14].

Maritain also believes that a person who is already internally, by their natural structure, a social being, needs society to become a person. Meanwhile, the relationship between the individual and society is complex and exists in the context of the dignity and freedom of the individual and the common good. For Maritain, personality stands above society and political and economic institutions [22, 23].

Contrary to pragmatism and Marxism, according to Maritain, Christian humanism should be preserved both in the concept of man and in education. Social relationships should assist in that. Christian humanism preserves the horizontal dimension of the human person and simultaneously connects them with God. The latter does not prevent the person from fulfilling their earthly duties; on the contrary, it helps them by providing important additional motives [10].

According to Maritain, the development of new thinking and new social attitudes is especially important in the education of man. Furthermore, today we can see a rise in the importance of a new type of relationship between the person and society, a common good, and a new, although rooted in tradition, perspective on work. Therefore, an important task is to teach people to work for the common good, seeing it as an expression of brotherly love arising from the commandment to love God. Undoubtedly, socialization at the level of the spirit is more important than external effects. For this reason, following the general rule of education, social education needs to 'go deep' [6].

Social education, according to Maritain, includes three directions [14]:

- social education in a strict sense, which allows every person to be who they are and what they can become and aims to teach everyone to respect others, cooperate, and take responsibility for their own development;
- civic education, the purpose of which is to develop civic virtues: cooperation for the common good, subordination of one's own good to the common good, and obedience to the authorities;
- political education, which concerns participation in political processes and the creation and reform of the objects of social and political life.

Social education in a broad sense, covering the above areas, is impossible without the participation of teachers and students in public life. Of particular importance is participation in self-government and the management of public affairs. Social education should develop "a sense of freedom and responsibility, human rights and responsibilities, the courage to take risks and exercise power for

the common good and, at the same time, respect for humanity in every person” [cit. ex. 19, p.93].

In Maritain's view, social education aims to raise a citizen capable of living in a personalist and Christian democratic society. The people, according to Maritain, have the natural right to govern themselves, but true democracy is possible only with the recognition of the rule of God's law and the spiritual dignity of the individual. Hence, the task of education is to instill respect for the natural moral law and for the common good as the realization of the commandment of love. Maritain deliberately highlights the virtues of citizenship (service to the common good, responsibility, and discipline) and emphasizes that socialization needs to take place ‘at the spiritual level’, through awareness of brotherly love and the principle of subsidiarity.

5. Religious upbringing. Man is a being that exists in a vital connection with God. Religious upbringing is thus inseparable from the comprehensive formation of the human person. In the words of Maritain, “All observers agree that the gap between religion and life is at the heart of the spiritual chaos we experience today” [cit. ex. 9, p.388]. This gap is also present in parenting, which often leads the child to spiritual chaos.

Maritain categorically claims that disregard of religious upbringing leads to spiritual chaos in the individual. The gap between faith and life, which has emerged in modern culture, is reflected in school, depriving the child of support in their highest values. Therefore, the return of the religious dimension to education is a necessary condition for the development of an internally free and responsible person. Religious upbringing means giving the person the knowledge they need to make a free, informed choice whether to believe. “There is nothing more free than an act of faith”, Maritain points out, emphasizing that only a religiously educated person can renounce faith knowing the reason for this decision, that is, truly freely [cit. ex. 9, p.390]. In other words, the presence of religion in upbringing does not limit but, on the contrary, expands the horizons of freedom. This also corresponds to Orthodox pedagogical thought: for example, it is said that God's awareness of the granted moral law and personal dialogue with the Creator is a reliable foundation of a healthy society. This understanding reinforces Maritain's idea about the inseparability of religion from the full development of personality.

Summarizing the results, we should emphasize that Maritain answers the key problems of modern education. His warnings about the excessive narrowness of educational goals and the loss of transcendental guidelines are especially relevant today. The presented concept of integral education seeks to correct these distortions by restoring the balance between scientific and technical knowledge and spiritual and moral wisdom. This holistic approach meets the challenges of our time, from the crisis of values to the fragmentation of knowledge, offering to give education back its lost meaning of the highest good and human dignity.

However, while Maritain's neo-Thomist framework offers a profound and cohesive response to the fragmentation of modern education, a critical perspective must acknowledge the significant challenges in applying it within contemporary secular and pluralistic societies. The model's foundational reliance on a specific

Christian metaphysical framework—including the acceptance of a personal God, a defined natural moral law, and the ultimate end of human life in divine beatitude—poses a primary limitation.

Firstly, in secular public spheres, the explicit integration of religious upbringing and theological virtues directly conflicts with principles of state neutrality and the separation of church and education. Mandating such a curriculum would be untenable in many modern democratic systems. Secondly, the model's strength in its coherent worldview is also its limitation in a context of philosophical pluralism. Societies today encompass a wide array of worldviews—secular humanist, non-theistic, Buddhist, Islamic, etc.—that may not accept the Thomistic-Aristotelian conception of the soul, the 'spiritual superexistence', or the specific virtue ethics Maritain prescribes. For them, what Maritain presents as universal human truths may be seen as particular to the Christian tradition.

Consequently, the direct implementation of Maritain's integral humanism faces the risk of being perceived as sectarian or exclusionary in a diverse classroom. This does not invalidate the internal coherence of his philosophy, but it highlights a practical tension: the very society that might need his corrective against utilitarian education is the one least likely to accept its metaphysical premises. Therefore, the enduring value of Maritain's thought for a broader audience may lie not in its direct application as a system, but in its powerful critique of educational reductionism and its invitation to re-engage with fundamental questions of purpose, virtue, and the common good—even if the answers to those questions are negotiated through a different, pluralistic discourse.

4. Conclusions

The study demonstrated that the integral concept of education by Maritain bridges the gap between secular and spiritual principles in education, offering a holistic model of personality development.

Maritain's ideas respond to the challenges faced by modern pedagogy: the loss of the metaphysical dimension, the crisis of humanistic values, and the decline in the quality of moral upbringing. His neo-Thomist approach seeks to return to place the nurturing of virtue and the desire for truth back in the center of education, which agrees with the search for new guidelines in global educational practice. After all, Maritain was one of the inspirers of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The principles of respect for the dignity of the individual and their spiritual nature that lie at the core of the Declaration are fully consistent with Maritain's philosophy of education.

At the same time, philosophical and cultural ideas about integrality, humanism, and freedom in Maritain's concept of education are significant in modern culture, amidst the ambiguity of the dynamics of theory and pedagogical practice. In this context, the provisions of Maritain's philosophy of education presented in this article organize and deepen our view of the process of education and upbringing of a person. In the end, these provisions can serve efforts to create a holistic concept of education. Thus, Maritain's works in general (as well as

special works, particularly on education problems) are still interesting for social sciences and the humanities.

The results can be used in the development of modern concepts of education that strive to synthesize scientific and spiritual-moral approaches. Further study of Maritain's heritage, especially his special works on education, can enrich both the pedagogical theory and educational practice in the context of global cultural changes.

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