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## INTELLECTUAL JUSTICE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

AMERICAN MARITAIN ASSOCIATION  
DISCUSSION PANEL

*How can we maintain—or perhaps more importantly, restore—intellectual justice in the digital age?* Ours appears to be, for those committed to the love of wisdom and truth, a dangerous time; but also, perhaps, a time of unprecedented opportunity. Let us consider what Maritain writes in his “Philosophical Co-Operation and Intellectual Justice”:

Truths are running rampant. We meet them in every corner of our daily newspapers and weekly magazines, and in the speeches of our politicians... But the ordinary intellect hardly profits from this swarm of truths; it takes them in one on top of the other, along with the mass of errors which are also running rampant—a blotter soaking up everything without discrimination.

This means that setting forth and elaborating philosophically even the best-established truths is to little purpose if intellects are not purified, but instead remain intoxicated by the poisons which afflict the world. How can clear vision be expected of ailing eyes? How can a debilitated organism be expected to sort out the queer mixture it receives as food, and to assimilate what is healthy and burn what is poisoned?

Today, we suffer new truths and errors not merely in the daily newspaper or weekly magazine, but the new article of every hour, the new social media post of every three seconds, a vast invisible network of constantly felt influence specifying our minds indiscriminately to a digital blur.

However, this digital environment—in which the chaos of error seems to thrive—also allows an intellectual freedom from the narrowing constraints of contemporary academia, constraints that have often resulted in the Thomist philosopher, in particular, being flung far from public relevance in the civil life of the general public.

To bring focus to our discussion, we wish to take up these questions:

1. Can the modern university be adapted to the educational needs of the digital age?
2. What do we make of Maritain’s suggestion that the “perennial philosophy” ought to break free of the “limits of a school where it would be content merely to transmit to a few rare minds the heritage of a wisdom grown perforce esoteric”?
3. What is or ought to be the contribution of the Thomist philosopher in the digital environment?
4. How do we help students develop habits by which they can navigate the floods of information and maintain a relation to truth?