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Being in the World: A Quotable Maritain Reader (Book Review)

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BOOK REVIEW

Being in the World: A Quotable Maritain Reader

Mario O. D'Souza, C.S.B. (Ed.), with Jonathan R. Seiling
Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press
328 pages; \$35.00USD (paperback and ebook)
ISBN: 978-0-268-00899-4 (paperback), 978-0-268-07784-6 (ebook)
<http://undpress.nd.edu/books/P03142>

Reviewed by Randall Woodard, Saint Leo University

Mario O. D'Souza and Jonathan R. Seiling have gone to great lengths to offer a meaningful work that provides a well-structured and brilliantly researched quotable Maritain reader. Intentionally designed not to be an overview of Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain's thought, nor an introduction to his ideas, the authors collected significant quotations and organized them to assist readers reflect on major themes in Maritain's numerous works. Rather than offer commentary or an introduction to each section of the book, the authors decided to let the well-selected quotes stand alone because of the belief that "a work such as this should see as little of the editor's silhouette as possible" (p. 12).

Providing readers with a strong list of texts that could serve as general introductions to Maritain's body of works for those who are not ready to tackle Maritain on their own, D'Souza explains that the "principle aim is to provide a book of quotations as a ready reference for those who are familiar with Maritain's thought and writings" (p. 10). Although the primary audience for the work is a person with a familiarity of Maritain's thought and philosophy, the brief introduction to the text explains that the hope was to still remain accessible to a wider audience.

The book offers 40 chapters of quotes organized alphabetically by topic. The selected quotes reflect the wide range of Maritain's wisdom and expertise in numerous philosophical areas, as well as reflections on the role of theology and insights related to a variety of topics including church, politics, culture, prayer, and poetry. Each of the chapters offers a strong list of long and short quotes that offer readers the strongest thoughts on the specific topic in ques-

tion. A great strength of the book is the way in which the collection of quotes truly provides readers with intellectually deep material and an invitation to digest it slowly. The chapters do not read as a typical text, but rather invite readers into a slow process of reflection and deep thinking.

The area that will likely be most interesting to readers of the *Journal of Catholic Education* is on philosophy of education. In this chapter, not only is Maritain's vision of education offered, the editors include important quotes that connect philosophy of education to the nature of the human person and the relationship one's vision of the person has to one's vision of society, work, virtue, and also what it means to be a teacher. Of primary importance in this section is Maritain's philosophy of education as it relates to the issues of being and purpose. Thus, a strong appreciation for the humanities and education aimed at liberating the person are central. For Maritain, "education directed toward wisdom, centered on the humanities, aimed to develop in people the capacity to think correctly and to enjoy truth and beauty, is education for freedom, or liberal education" (p. 86).

Central within an education for liberation are the recognition that teachers are essential and a vision of education that keeps the formation and authentic freedom of students at the forefront. Education for knowledge and skills is important, but not as much as the humanization and formation of the persons in a teacher's charge. Maritain explains, "the most precious gift in an educator is a sort of sacred and loving attention to the child's mysterious identity, which is a hidden thing that no techniques can teach" (p. 93).

This text will be relevant for educators and readers of this journal in two specific ways. The first is that the editors have expended great time and effort to scrutinize Maritain's works for highly significant quotes and then sorted them according to major themes. Through these efforts, the editors have crafted a goldmine of Maritain's wisdom into a concise and readable book. Secondly, since the work of finding and sorting relevant quotations has been done for the reader, the book opens the world of Maritain's thought for those with a basic knowledge of his work, but also in a certain way for those who may be new to it. Rather than having to spend considerable time scouring through numerous books, readers have been given a great collection of quotes that take a reader directly to the heart of Maritain's thought. Because of this, the work is searchable, accessible, and wonderful for slow reading and reflection.

The one weakness of the work (despite being clearly not a part of the editor's intention) is that readers are provided exceptional quotes, but offered

little in terms of introduction and context. It seems very fair that the editors determined this to be the best model for their book; however, for those without much background knowledge, the onus is on the reader to work through Maritain's profound brilliance without a direct written guide. Despite this one critique, the book is recommended as a valuable reference book for educators as well as a book to enjoy slowly, allowing the wisdom of Maritain and the hard work of D'Souza and Seiling to pay off.

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