

and provokes us to draw attention to yet another 'task for thomists.' For here we seem to be confronted with an 'either-or' which, I believe, St. Thomas himself has shown to be illusory. 'Perhaps St. Thomas Aquinas made no greater contribution to the history of human thought than by his painstaking synthesis of Plato and Aristotle. Yet perhaps no element in his thought has received less consideration from students of his work . . . .'<sup>29</sup> It is a theme which cannot be developed here; but among the many services which Dr. Temple has rendered to thomists by his address, it is perhaps not the least that he has again reminded us—however delicately and incidentally—of the need for its investigation.

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<sup>29</sup> 'The Platonic Tradition and St. Thomas Aquinas,' *Eastern Churches Quarterly*, Jan. 1941, pp. 213 ff.

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## REVIEWS

REDEEMING THE TIME. By Jacques Maritain. (Geoffrey Bles; The Centenary Press; 2s. 6d.).

In point of literary criticism the most pressing comment on Maritain's latest book is this: that while in the early works the focus of intellectual effort lay in those passages where scholastic conceptions were being forged into modern language, so that the high degree of attention required to follow his thought was at the same time an educative discipline in metaphysical thinking, the same can no longer be said in the same sense of 'Redeeming the Time.' The focus is now in a quite different kind of problem, and the reader is no longer aware of the same kind of effort. In some sense, no doubt, it is true that Maritain has established his terms and can now refer to them without the necessity of forging each one afresh; but that does not express the plain fact that he is using words differently and with a different purpose. It would appear, if I have not read amiss the numerous indications in the text as well as the whole manner of his writing, that Maritain is attempting, by entering the struggles of his time, to *make amends* for metaphysics.

That would seem to be the gist of the anxiety expressed by implication in his preface, where he says, 'This is not a book of *separated* philosophy, separated from faith and separated from concrete life.'

In Maritain's earlier work, notably in '*Réflexions sur l'Intelligence et sur sa Vie Propre*,' the Achilles' heel of his brilliant metaphysical writing lies in a certain disdain of the 'conditions of existence' and of the physical. There he looks upon physical life as the domain of potency and change, of mere becoming, and therefore of little relative interest to one who has wings for the clear sky of being. From such a metaphysical point of view the difference between the relatively less and the relatively more stable, purely as such, in a fundamentally changing world, is negligible.

In the realm of physical life there are relative stabilities important even from a secular point of view in the understanding of human society. Social life is based upon a divine understanding of the physical lives of people by which both physical work and the begetting of children have the blessing of God. Christian marriage, if we merely generalise upon appearances, is a relative stability among the relative instabilities of the world. If we view it as it is, then it is an absolute stability anchored to the stability of God by the physical seal of a sacrament.

Maritain has never seemed to me to convey any profound sense of the physical stability implied in social life based on Christian sacraments. Much less than in his early work (and one should remember *Art et Scolastique*) could his present view of nature and of man's social nature be called sacramentalist. The influence of Bergson, against whose philosophy Maritain has struggled for a quarter of a century, is felt with considerable force in his present social writings. Fully armed against the terminology of his philosophy of the spirit, Maritain lay open to the suggestion of his philosophy of nature.

A subtle *condescension* towards anything of the nature of physical stability is Bergson's most successful weapon whether one accepts his 'conceptualization' of it or not.

In plunging into the world of temporal conflicts Maritain enters concrete life precisely as an evolutionary becoming to which he brings rationalization, in his 'personalist and pluralist' conception of society, and dramatization in his attempt to see the divine meaning of the persecution of the Jews; considering it to be the Catholic and Pauline way to 'take part at the temporal level in the constant work of the concrete intelligence which neither definitely resolves nor overcomes antinomies, but at each moment in time discovers whatever is needed to make them bearable and more supple.'

BERNARD KELLY.