



## **Reassessing the Liberal State: Reading Maritain's Man and the State (American Maritain Association Publications)**

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# Reassessing the Liberal State: Reading Maritain's *Man and the State* (American Maritain Association Publications)

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This collection of essays revisits Jacques Maritain's book, *Man and the State*?the University of Chicago Walgreen lectures of 1949?and critically engages its greatest themes and arguments: the character of the modern state and its relation to the body politic, the state's functions and claims, the basis of authority, the foundation of human rights and natural law, structural pluralism, Church and State relations, national sovereignty, and the prospects for world government. The contributors address whether Maritain has successfully accomplished his project of engaging modernity from the perspective of a 20th century disciple of Thomas Aquinas; whether his reformulations and revisions of the modern state are philosophically sound and prudent; and whether his developments of Aristotle and Aquinas are faithful to the sources.

Maritain, drawing upon the philosophy of Aquinas, represents a significant achievement: he provides a viable reassessment of the liberal state, uniting Thomistic and Aristotelian traditions with the human rights thrust of modern political philosophy. In short, Maritain reassesses the liberal state in light of ancient and medieval political traditions, seeking to find what is true, enduring, and practical in the modern liberal state, while criticizing its excesses and reconceptualizing its philosophical foundations. The contributors to this collection find Maritain has achieved much in the accomplishment of this project. Some continue this project by applying Maritain's philosophy to contemporary issues. Other contributors find it helpful, however, to compare Maritain to other contemporary political philosophers, and to question his use of the philosophy of Aquinas.

Maritain's political philosophy, and *Man and the State* in particular, is worth continued study. Although his influence was greatest in the 1950s and 1960s and his philosophy has been displaced by new trends, his work shows a remarkable resilience and relevance to the issues of the day, offering a deeper philosophical foundation and more flexible set of tools for analysis than currently provided.

Timothy Fuller, professor of political science and acting president of Colorado College, is the editor of *Leading and Leadership* and *The Voice of Liberal Learning: Michael Oakeshott on Education*. John P. Hittinger is professor of philosophy at the United States Air Force Academy and coeditor of *Liberalism at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Contemporary Liberal Theory and its Critics*.

Contributors: J. Budziszewski, Joseph M. DeTorre, Gregory Doolan, Desmond FitzGerald, Timothy Fuller, John R. Goodreau, Catherine Green, William Haggerty, James G. Hanink, Jeanne M. Heffernan, John P. Hittinger, Russell Hittinger, Richard Lemp, V. Bradley Lewis, Nicholas C. Lund-Molfese, John G. Trapani, Jr., Deborah Wallace, Henk E. S. Woldring, and Michael Woodward

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