

Max Picard

The World of Silence



Preface by Gabriel Marcel

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Something like a hymn, a prayer, a work of devotion rather than philosophical analysis. A book that could be read (perhaps should be read) contemplatively rather than discursively, so that each sentence and word is allowed to work its way through the frantic motions of our brains into the quieter notions of our hearts, shaping a whole new and wonderful vision of the world. For it is all of creation, both visible and invisible, that Picard senses as emerging from the fertile womb of silence, about which adjectives like divine and holy and life-giving might properly be applied: 'it is a positive, a complete world unto itself.' Whether Picard is speaking of God or man, language or music, the world of nature or of human artifice, silence is the lingua franca which he develops in images both aural and (even more strikingly) visual: 'the branches of the trees are like dark lines that have followed the movements of the silence; the leaves thickly cover the branches as if the silence wanted to conceal itself. . . The forest is like a great reservoir of silence out of which the silence trickles in a thin, slow stream and fills the air with its brightness.' Picard's great prose poem, like the silence it depicts, 'does not fit into the world of profit and utility; it simply is. It seems to have no other purpose; it cannot be exploited.' Perhaps herein also lies our highest praise for this remarkable book.

The World of Silence Details

Date : Published July 20th 2006 by Eighth Day Press (first published 1948)

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Author : Max Picard

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From Reader Review The World of Silence for online ebook

Fatih Gökmen says

A must read!

Mark says

Recommended in Soul p. 160

booklady says

The 'World of Silence' as described by Max Picard in his book by the same name is Real, Alive and Endangered, even more so than any currently threatened species.

He describes Silence in such a way I was constantly drawn to It, as to place at once familiar and new, hauntingly and achingly poetical, yet as completely practical and essential as breathing.

Picard's book was written in 1948 and yet except for the chapter on The Radio, it could have been written in the last 20 years. His observations about the enemies of, and encroachments upon, Silence are more applicable now than they were 70 years ago.

He distinguishes Silence from the lack of speech or sound. It is a quality of Being which Sr. Marie-Aimée de Jésus would agree with as she identified 12 Degrees of Silence. Picard discusses some of her levels (degrees) but not in the same systematic way. Yet his mystical musings seem to be more meditation as opposed to the disciplinary progression proposed by Sr. Marie's book. Certainly one is inspired by Picard, but exactly how and in which way will be highly individualized by each reader.

His work most reminds me of Buber's I and Thou though, for me at least, many times easier to understand.

There were SO many good quotes it would take me many hours to transcribe them. Just a few from the beginning are below. I did **not** want to finish this book, as if to do so was to leave this sacred realm and lose its treasure. In my top 10 favorite books ever read.

5+ stars. Okay, silence...

August 16, 2018: The word has supremacy over Silence.

There is no beginning to Silence and no end.

Where Silence is, man is observed by Silence.

Silence ...

is.

is formative.

is the only phenomenon today that is "useless".

Henry Sienkiewicz says

I encountered this book through a brief reference to Picard by Thomas Merton. Merton thought of Picard as an inspiration, and I would completely agree. This book has provided me with many wonderful insights.

Valori says

A wonderful and thorough treatment of the ontological value of silence - it's quality in and of being in itself, before language and from which language and speech arise.

Gabit says

Max Picard has much to say on the nature of silence and, indeed, life. Thanks to the author for sharing his musings.

John O'Brien says

A beautiful and deep treatment of the phenomenon of silence, this book was a major source for my thesis, thanks to Dr. Eric McLuhan (son of Marshall), and a few others, who recommended it. Picard was a philosopher in the tradition of "phenomenology", who wasn't afraid to weave his own poetic intuitions into his analysis of human experience. Unfortunately out of print, if you can find this 1952 book, keep it and read it!

Maughn Gregory says

Picard writes from a mid-twentieth-century, European, Catholic, neoPlatonic perspective that took some work on my part to naturalize and otherwise construe so that his book could be meaningful to my experience. And though I was unable to make use of much of his religious metaphysics (Being, the demonic, Logos) and though I was troubled by his denigration of "primitive" peoples, urbanity and animals, I was rewarded with some wonderful insights into the ethical, political, aesthetic and spiritual depravity that comes from living in a world of noise, hurry, shallowness and greed. And with passages like this:

"In winter silence is visible: the snow is silence become visible.... Snowflakes meet in the air and fall together on to the earth, which is already white in the silence. Silence meeting silence. People stand silent on the side of the street. Human language is covered by the snow of silence. What remains of [a person] is his body standing in the snow like a milestone of silence. People stand still and silence moves between them" (106-07).

Ephrem Arcement says

Picard has crafted such a unique book here that it may take some a moment to re-calibrate. I was hooked from the first sentence. This is poetic prose at its finest dazzling with philosophical and spiritual insights as it explores about every possible angle of silence imaginable.
