also many more, and one should study the contemporary treatments of these problems. 'Analytic' philosophers have been working on pretty much all the problems that engaged Thomas Aquinas, and if one neglects this recent work one is likely to miss insights that Thomas Aquinas would have appreciated. In philosophy, as in all other fields of scholarship and science, if one pretends to contribute something new, one should definitely know what has already been done.

Teaching and research in Catholic universities will then not be very different from what it is in good secular universities. One will emphasize the same general knowledge and the same skills. The sole difference will be that in Catholic universities one will always make sure that central Catholic domains are covered, such as the philosophy of religion, ethics and the history of medieval philosophy.

1 John Haldane, "What Future has Catholic Philosophy?" In *Virtues and Virtue Theories*, Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, 1997/8, pp. 79–90.

Bas C. van Fraassen

There certainly are atheists in foxholes ... and on deathbeds, even among the Jobs on dungheaps. But the old familiar lie does point to a truth: foxholes, death, and despair are also sacred places where we encounter God. Certainly there are atheists in love, transported in joy, awestruck on first beholding the mountains. But joy, awe, and love are also where we find the divine on earth, where we see in others and ourselves the outward signs of inward grace.

What does philosophy have to do with all this? I am perhaps the last person to be in any position to comment on Professor Haldane's Aquinas Lecture.[1] For I am a Catholic and I am a philosopher, but I am not a Catholic philosopher in his sense. Yet I find myself moved by Haldane's narrative of a philosophical tradition begun in the Middle Ages and persisting to this day in its effort to bring faith and reason together. And I accept a challenge he poses—though it is not (to use his words) the challenge 'to harness [my] reason to my faith'. I am concerned not so much with the tension or harmony between (neo)Thomism and analytic philosophy as with an underlying question:

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what does philosophy have to do with the issues of prime concern to the religious? More broadly, I see among the secular also many who face some of the same questions as the religious do concerning meaning, significance, and value.

Thus I share some of Professor Haldane's concerns. But we are separated first of all by a different historical vision. Perhaps mine is a bit too romantic; it is certainly less founded in historical knowledge, and may say more about my philosophical bent than about history. The best short statement of it that I know was by E. A. Moody, who is mainly known for his work on late medieval logic and natural philosophy.[2] When new Greek and Arab learning became available in the Latin West in the 12th century, the Church was saliently confronted with the secular enterprise of knowledge, not yet divided into science and philosophy. This learning came in highly metaphysical form, purporting to provide knowledge not only of the realm of the senses but of the ultimate causes and of necessary eternal truths. Christian theologians who engaged in philosophy needed to expose the 'illusions of reason' (to use Kant's later phrase), and to show the limits of this enterprise while preserving its value. In this light we can see a variety of levels of assimilation, from too much through the moderate course of Aquinas to the radical empiricism of the nominalist philosopher/theologians of the late 14th century. Aquinas curtailed the pretensions of philosophy in part through what he made of the Aristotelian insistence that all knowledge is acquired through the senses. Although such philosophers as William of Ockham were still very much engaged in metaphysics (by our lights), they added much stricter limits to the extrapolation of that knowledge to claims which go beyond our powers of observation. In doing so, they separated natural philosophy still farther from theology, and contributed greatly to the emergence of the modern empirical sciences—but also eliminated the pretensions of natural philosophy to provide us with a world-view.

On this contrasting view of the history, what went wrong at the end of the Middle Ages is not that Western philosophy left metaphysics and natural theology behind. On the contrary, the problem was that it returned to metaphysics in a way that was, I will admit at once, vastly inferior to the Scholastic traditions that it purported to replace. The God of the Philosophers of the 17th and early 18th century, which Pascal so scathingly rejected, was a pale and sickly creature. Kant's Critique should have ended this modern metaphysical enterprise once and for all. But of course it did not—today something very much like pre-Kantian metaphysics has had a resurgence in, of all things, analytic philosophy. It is amusing, but saddening too, to see philosophers today

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(I am referring to analytic philosophers, *mes semblables, mes frères* ...) accepting the very same patterns of argument of the proofs for the existence of the God of the philosophers, which they have long since rejected, as supporting the existence of far stranger metaphysical entities.

I appreciate that in the Thomist scheme, reason rightly pursued will place the secular thinker into a position where a religious world-view becomes a genuine option. At that point, faith will no longer be foolishness to the world, and the world can convince itself that believers need be neither knaves nor fools. Here is, I think, the second main difference between how Haldane and I see the situation. There is no point at which faith can be anything but foolishness in secular thinking. I am not referring to doctrine here, least of all to creationism, transubstantiation, miracles, or resurrection, or any of the other quasi-philosophical, quasi-scientific beliefs which the secular think they can attribute to us in the sense in which they understand them. What I mean is: religious see themselves and the world we live in differently, see them in a different light, and to the secular this can never be other than baseless *Schwaermerei*.

Where the believer sees a sacred place or signs of grace, the secular are likely to see human beings in certain psychological or physiological states, playing roles in complex social games, and nothing more. Not all non-believers think that way—but, unfortunately, some secular philosophers not only tend to think like that but to make it their profession to promulgate this sort of reductive approach to the human condition. Philosophical materialism and naturalism become then the bulwark on which those particular reductive secular attitudes can be defended and made to seem intellectually compelling. I see this as tragic, not only for the religious but for all who see their emotional and aesthetic sensibility threatened in just the same way. There is to my eyes not a great distance between the philosophical materialist and the philistine. So there is a task for philosophy: to show that there is nothing rationally compelling in such reductive views, that they are intellectually myopic, and that their appeal lies not in reason but in fashionable prejudice.

Professor Haldane says that for the Catholic (I think he means, for the Thomist) philosophy is an intellectual high road to speculative and practical truth. I cannot agree, I cannot see philosophy as being able to be more— at most—than a voice in the wilderness, clearing the way for the Lord. Perhaps we differ here as well in our view of the secular enterprise of knowledge itself. Here is how I see it. In just the same way that economic, industrial, mercantile, and political enterprises are

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often driven by illusions and baseless beliefs, so are scientific and academic inquiries. Often enough this 'venture capitalism with ideas' pays off— that is when history remembers it and counts it as an achievement. In science the illusions and enthusiasms are so constrained, so bridled, and so much submitted to checks and balances, that it is saved from its own excesses, in ways that the pseudo-sciences and *il pensiero debole* are not. But it remains that much of its success is achieved by audacious sorties into the unknown—followed by ruthless natural selection that preserves only those heroes who happened to 'get it right'. We should then not be surprised to see that enterprising spirit strike out far beyond its competence in regions where the usual checks and balances do not work.

We should indeed do more than save the world from the illusions of reason: after the critique must come sustained effort to achieve authentic understanding of art, of literature, of emotion, of science, of logic and mathematics. For it is only in misunderstanding that nihilistic, diminishing views of human life can flourish. Similarly, we must add a sustained effort to determine just what it is to be secular, and what it is to be religious, in terms that will open up a possibility, a place, which can be seen before a person becomes religious—to remove the presuppositions which preclude the very significance of anything having to do with faith or grace. But this cannot be done on the terms laid down by the secular. What can we do? A religious person may not be motivated so much to think about religion as to think about God, grace, the Kingdom of Heaven. It is too introverted, too self-oriented, to think about religious experience as experience, too subjectivist—as if our private feelings would somehow be the important part of all that! This may be similar to the artist who can hardly bear to take on the role of academic discussant of his or her art. Well, perhaps then we should engage in philosophical inquiry in ways that are not dry and derivative, but can stand as an art form in its own right. This is an ideal, and we'll certainly fail—but just as all art is failure, as Giacometti said, and just as being a Christian is a life of daily failure as St. Paul describes, all authentic philosophy is failure.

So philosophy does after all have a lot to do with all this. The approach I favour is not to develop a superior rival metaphysics, but to forsake traditional metaphysics altogether. How is that possible? After all, if we are intellectually responsible, we will try to develop something like a synoptic view of ourselves, the world, and everything else there is. Yes; and all that we achieve by way of systematically organized, rationally managed and maintained opinion is a great treasure. But I propose that we should regard it as we do all earthly

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treasures, as temporary, tradable assets of our present stage of life, as tools and resources for our pilgrimage through this world. With such a view of knowledge there will be no temptation for reason to overreach itself—or for us to think that by our reason we can supply humankind with a morality, meaning, or cognitive access to the ultimate question of what there is.

It is only the secular, I think, who have reason to fear that life without a world-view will be a life without meaning or value.

Notes

My special thanks to Eleonore Stump for her thoughtful, helpful correspondence; the remaining errors and misstatements are mine.

1 John Haldane, "Thomism and the Future of Catholic Philosophy", Aquinas Lecture, Blackfriars, Oxford, February 1998; see also his "What future has Catholic philosophy?" Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophy Association, vol. 72, 1998.

2 Ernest A. Moody, "Empiricism and metaphysics in medieval philosophy", pp. 287–304 in his *Studies in Medieval Philosophy, Science, and Logic*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975. I have developed my own views a little further in "The World of Empiricism", pp. 114–134 in Jan Hilgevoort (ed.) *Physics and Our View of the World*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

John Greco

John Haldane has called for the marriage of Anglo-American (or analytic) philosophy and Thomism, arguing that the union would benefit both. I endorse Haldane's call for a more intimate relationship between analytic and Thomistic philosophy. However, I want to suggest that the obstacles for achieving this are more formidable than he might realize. In order to see why, we must first review how we have reached the current situation of virtual non-engagement.

As Haldane's paper suggests, there is no similar problem between Thomism and the neo-Kantian tradition, or between Thomism and the phenomenological tradition. Part of the reason for this is surely that Catholicism has its intellectual roots in continental Europe, and accordingly a Catholic formation is more likely to reflect the influence of Germany or France than Great Britain. But that is not the entire story. In the remarks that follow I will focus on a dynamic that has largely occurred in the

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