chapter on some Wittgensteinian analysts – not I think Wittgenstein – of religion and religious language.

What is done for knowledge in the fifth chapter is done for morality in the sixth. As we transcend ourselves in knowing – correct understanding is a discovery of what is the case – so we transcend ourselves in our moral life in that we seek not only what seems to us good but what is good. As PM recognizes, the argument will convince only those who accept his analysis of moral action. Here the context is that worked out by Lévinas: 'ultimate meaning and value . . . is achieved . . . by attending to what is more basic than presence to oneself, namely, presence of the Other – which calls the egoism and arbitrariness of the self into question and invites one to aim beyond freedom to justice' (p. 72). It may be worth remembering in passing that the Roman definition of justice – the virtue of justice is the constant and enduring willingness to render to each what is due – goes beyond the egoism and arbitrariness of the self. Lévinas does not so much invent a gnomic and enigmatic account of moral action as bring occluded aspects of a tradition to the fore.

These ciphers of transcendence, asymmetrical relations, do not directly show that God exists. (The third chapter argues against Anselm's proof of the existence of God, but accepts Anselm's description.) What they suggest, when metaphysically deciphered, is that God, conceived as the all perfect and necessarily existing Being, may be affirmed, as their theoretical truth-condition, to be positively possible, and so, briefly stated, PM's argument for God's existence is : if an all perfect, necessarily existing being is positively possible, then such a being exists. But we can argue by indirect *a posteriori* argument from experiences of asymmetry to the positive possibility of such a being, and hence to its existence. Evidently, not all contingent possibilities are realized, and so this argument from positive possibility to actuality is valid only in the case of that which is necessary if positively possible.

Crucial to the entire enterprise is the meaning of the word "God". The first chapter is PM's answer which readers must constantly keep in mind if they are to make sense of the whole. The penultimate, in some ways the most illuminating and challenging, chapter of *The Sense of Creation* examines the co-existence with the world of this utterly transcendent being – the God beyond of the subtitle – who is its cause.

GARRETT BARDEN

SEEKING MEANING AND MAKING SENSE by John Haldane (*Imprint Academic*, Exeter, 2008). Pp. viii + 148, £8.95 pbk

In the past twenty years John Haldane has established himself as a philosopher who has something to say to the non-specialist. Through articles in British Catholic weekly newspapers and Scottish daily newspapers he has assumed not only the mantle of a Public Intellectual, but a Catholic Public Intellectual, an altogether rarer breed.

Seeking Meaning and Making Sense collects twenty pieces of Haldane's journalism of the past decade. That this represents only a part of Haldane's newspaper output during this time is clear from the fact that he has also published in 2008 another collection of articles, *The Church and the World*, where Haldane's Catholic interests are much more to the fore. (The latter was reviewed by Margaret Atkins in the January 2009 issue of *New Blackfriars*.)

Yet there are points of continuity. A philosopher is interested in ideas, and bringing one's Catholicism to one's philosophy not surprisingly helps make one receptive to ideas from the past, especially from classical and medieval thought.

© The author 2009
Journal compilation © The Dominican Council/Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2009

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01283_4.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

To this Haldane brings the analytical rigour of Anglophone philosophy, along with a desire to challenge those currents of contemporary thought scornful of the past, as if unaware that modernity has its own vulnerabilities. From the first of the essays Haldane makes his general perspective clear. There are, he claims, three options. The first two are rejected: Romantic Reaffirmation, with its attempt at recreating the past; and Self-Conscious Irony, where intellectual enquiry is treated as a highly sophisticated form of play (p. 6). Haldane's position is that of Reform and Renewal: "rearticulating and where necessary amending older conceptions of human nature and human values so as to show their coherence, plausibility and contemporary relevance" (p. 138).

The way Haldane has put this into practice has earned him the epithet: "a medievalist in modern clothes." However, this is not obvious in *Seeking Meaning and Making Sense*. St Thomas Aquinas, Haldane's principal medieval interlocutor, is, for example, mentioned only three times. Unlike in *The Church and the World*, Haldane's spirit of reform and renewal takes the form of a proud Scot calling his compatriots to appreciate the richness of their nation's intellectual heritage, reminding them that this great tradition lives on – to some extent. Of course, Haldane would doubtless point out that the fact that an academic philosopher such as he is published in the daily Scottish press reflects the continued strengths of Scotland: "As one moves north, the soil of moral community grows deeper. Cross the border and one enters another country with its own religious tradition, and its own education and legal systems. Until recently moral philosophy was more or less compulsory in Scottish universities and it is still pursued by large numbers of first year arts students" (p. 35).

Alongside such affirmations are many passages exhibiting a certain elegiac tone, sadness that his nation risks betraying its heritage, as shown in the disappointingly low effect of the Scottish moral tradition on recent government policy, despite the disproportionate number of Scots in the corridors of power. Haldane points out that the Scottish university whose Chair of Moral Philosophy was once occupied by the philosopher Thomas Reid, the "philosopher of common sense", in 2001 awarded a Doctor of Letters to Billy Connolly, that other great exemplar of common sense. Haldane is tantalisingly reserved about what he thinks about this particular case, and good-naturedly does not stoop to moralism. Yet the basic point seems clear: great traditions can all too easily be eroded.

Here, as in so many of the other essays, Haldane shows a keen appreciation of contemporary British life, not least its moral and intellectual health, arguing for the view that they are closely related. When addressing such questions, the spirit of renewal and reform is not just about taking on board older conceptions of human nature and human values, but challenging a society whose moral sensitivities risk becoming coarsened and corrupted. This is most evident in two of the essays, on the status of the embryo and on the ethics of war. In these essays contemporary ethics stands accused of preferring inferior conceptions to past wisdom, manifested in its unexamined utilitarianism and the ease with which it dilutes moral principles foundational within human morality. On abortion: "An embryo is not a potential human being but a human being with potential. To kill it is to kill a human being" (p. 55); and on war: "Ironically, however, had the scholastic doctrine of just war been better known, it might have been that an artefact of medieval ethical theory would have inhibited contemporary consequentialist strategies of war, and saved our leaders from incurring harms to their own people as well as inflicting terrible and longstanding suffering upon the people of Iraq" (p. 61).

This is, of course, to enter into controversial territory and Haldane's tone is often critical. However, such conclusions as these are preceded by disciplined argument, where rigour is trusted more than the emotional heat that so often derails proper debate. Throughout, accessibility to an educated daily newspaper

© The author 2009
Journal compilation © The Dominican Council/Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2009

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01283_4.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

reading public is seemingly effortlessly achieved, without avoiding difficult concepts or argumentative precision. In this respect he is not unlike his great Scottish Enlightenment predecessors.

There is a breadth to this collection that is highly impressive: bioethics, aesthetics, the legacy of the Scottish Enlightenment, the British Union, the problem of evil, the intellectual achievement of Elizabeth Anscombe and the change of opinion on the existence of God of the erstwhile atheist, Anthony Flew. Yet, there is arguably something missing. Haldane's writings on the state of contemporary Catholicism, applauded by some and dismissed by others, are surely the part of his journalistic *oeuvre* that has elicited most comment and controversy, and distinguishes him most from other conservative commentators writing for the quality press. Publishing those pieces in a separate collection may make this one more acceptable to the general public, but simultaneously undercuts its *raison d'être*: to acquaint us properly with an outstandingly lucid voice whose Catholicism is central to the perspective from which he views the world. It is an acquaintance well worth making. He is a man of conviction who respects the reader enough to lay his cards on the table, presenting his own beliefs to the same scrutiny to which he submits those of others.

JOHN D. O'CONNOR OP

NATURE RED IN TOOTH AND CLAW: THEISM AND THE PROBLEM OF ANIMAL SUFFERING by Michael J. Murray (*Oxford University Press*, 2008) Pp. 224, £50

This book offers a fine example of the way in which analytic philosophy has opened up its imagination. After decades in which its practitioners feared to venture beyond a very narrow compass of subjects, its careful precision and clarity is now being applied to major theological and ethical topics. Michael Murray has chosen a problem that is fundamental for Jewish, Christian and Islamic thinkers at least: how could a good and powerful God allow so much suffering of non-human animals?

He begins with an overview of the general debate about the problem of evil, concluding with a careful explanation of the standards of proof that a defender of theism requires. He argues that for God to have a 'morally sufficient reason for permitting an evil' (p. 14), the evil must be necessary to secure a good the value of which sufficiently outweighs it, and it must be within God's 'rights' to permit this. If an explanation shows this in a way that the believer is not justified in rejecting in the light of the *overall* claims that he or she justifiably accepts, that explanation will count as adequate. Although Murray is too subtle to resort to crude utilitarianism, the language of weighing total goods and harms may make anti-consequentialist readers uneasy.

Murray next treats neo-Cartesian accounts of apparent animal suffering that see it as either illusory or morally insignificant. He concludes that these are difficult to disprove categorically, but will convince few people. He then looks at arguments based on the idea of the Fall of 'Adam', or of Satan; the latter, while more weakly attested by tradition, has the advantage of offering an explanation for 'pre-Adamic pain'. The next chapter discusses the positive usefulness of pain for individuals and for animal life in general, making use of very interesting medical evidence. Murray then goes on to examine various arguments for the value of stable, ordered, regularity in the world. He cautiously concludes that a world that moves from chaos to order via 'nomic regularity' could be sufficiently worthwhile to outweigh the totality of animal suffering that is its by-product. Finally, he draws on elements of possible defences from all his chapters to

© The author 2009
Journal compilation © The Dominican Council/Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 2009

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.2009.01283_4.x Published online by Cambridge University Press