



Language in Anne Le Fèvre Dacier (1647-1720)

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A distinguished translator of the Greco-Roman classics, Anne Dacier defends the value and necessity of the use of metaphor in language. Metaphorical speech permits the speaker to communicate complex spiritual and emotional truths which cannot be communicated through more prosaic speech. The Bible's repeated use of elaborate metaphors indicates divine approval of such figurative speech in religious matters.

The analogies frequently used by Homer in his epic poems illuminate spiritual reality in ways in which plainer speech cannot. Metaphorical speech also has the power to move the emotions and will of the listener in ways which definitions and abstract rhetoric cannot.

Madame Dacier opposed the efforts of some rationalists to purify the French language by abolishing elaborate metaphors and by promoting speech built on a clear one-to-one correspondence between the linguistic signifier and the object signified.

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Keywords:

analogy, language, literature, metaphor, Homer