



Language in Anne Le Fèvre Dacier (1647–1720)

John J. Conley
Loyola University of Maryland

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.

Primary Sources:

Dacier, Anne Le Fèvre 1714. *Des causes de la corruption du goût*. Paris: Rigaud. (A digital version of this work is available on *Gallica: bibliothèque numérique* at the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.)

Dacier, Anne Le Fèvre 1716. *Homère défendu contre l'apologie du Père Hardouin*. Paris: Coignard. (A digital version of this work is available on *Gallica: Bibliothèque numérique* at the website of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.)

Secondary Sources:

Bury, Emmanuel 1999. Madame Dacier, in Navitel, Colette (ed.): *Femmes savantes, savors de femmes: Du crépuscule de la Renaissance à l'aube des Lumières*.

Geneva: Droz, 209–220.

Conley, John J.: Anne Le Fèvre Dacier (1647–1720), in *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
URL: www.iep.utm.edu/dacier-a/ [22|10|2018].

Krück, Marie-Pierre 2009. *Poétique de la corruption chez Anne Dacier*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.

Keywords:

analogy, language, literature, metaphor, Homer