SPEAKING IN PARABLES: A STUDY IN METAPHOR AND THEOLOGY by Sally TeSelle. *SCM Press,* London. 1975. 186 pp. £2.00
LANGUAGE TRUTH AND POETRY: NOTES TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF LITERATURE by Graham Dunstan Martin. *Edinbourgh University Press.* 1975. 354 pp. Price not stated.

The nature and value of metaphorical language seems to be an 'in' topic just now: these two books each add something to the current discussion. Sallie TeSelle's attractive and unassuming essay has an explicitly theological purpose, namely to show that metaphorical language is basic to any theological discourse, and that we must therefore build any worthwhile modern theology upon the forms which most obviously embody it: poems, parables, novels and autobiographies. The argument is presented with enthusiasm and sincerity, and with a few exceptions is free from unnecessary jargon. As a corrective to heavyweight American academicism, it is welcome and refreshing. But like many correctives, it goes too far and over-simplifies. For example, to say that metaphor is not reducible to any 'literal' equivalent is true enough: but to say that all thought is metaphorical is self-defeating (though many distinguished people may have asserted it). You can't at the same time say this and object to systematic theologians who use what Philip Wheelwright called 'steno-language', (i.e. anti-metaphorical language). Furthermore, it is surely a cardinal point in linguistics since Saussure and Jacobson that there are two 'poles' of language: the metaphoric and the metonymic (Jacobson), and that there can be no communication which does not involve both to some extent. A second point on which I'd criticise Sallie TeSelle's book is that it makes the parable the test case of a religious utterance. She is right to insist on the significance of *narrative* all right: but are the parables the central narratives of the gospel? What about the narratives concerning Christ's passion and resurrection? Aren't these the key stories? And surely they are not parables, but claim to be in some sense, accounts of things that actually happened? Nothing is said in this book about these stories, almost as if they were an embarassment to the thesis, which is basically a version of the subjectivism to which Christianity tends to reduce itself once metaphysics has been thrown out of the window.

Martin's argument, in a nutshell, is that literary language, like scientific language but in a different way, defies simple commonsense analysis, is radically incomplete, illogical and ambiguous for very good reasons, and should therefore be encouraged as a weapon against the encroachments of Fascist or Communist dictators, or any other purveyors of final and absolute certainties. Yes: but plenty of others have said as much in half the space or less. Most of them are quoted somewhere or other in Martin's own very large and heavily annotated book. What then is the justification for another statement of this familiar position? A couple of points perhaps, suggest what Martin's own answer to this question may be. The first is his useful and persistent attempt—largely successful I think, though I am not really competenct to judge—to put poetic and scientific language into the same side of the scale, over against something which is hostile to both. (Hence perhaps his interest in the common opposition of scientists *and* literary men to Hitler and Stalin: but the case for the literary men is less clear than he would like it to be, and Solzhenitsyn's recent diatribes might require him to make some modifications). The second and much more dubious point is that the book attempts some sort of proof of the ineradicably complex nature of poetic language by way of a theory of metaphor which, in my view, is built upon logical sand.

Metaphor is possible, Martin suggests because of the complex 'connotations' of all words, and behind the words of concepts. Thus the theory of metaphor 'operates through the generalising function', for it asserts a similarity between different things by virtue of our ability to suppress the irrelevant 'connotations' of the things themselves, and concentrate on their similarities. Just as we get the concept 'dog' by noticing what is common to various dogs we see, while the distinguishing marks of individual dogs are 'suppressed', so in calling a brave man 'a lion', the irrel-

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evant connotations of lions, such as yellow colour, nocturnal habits etc., are suppressed in order that the connotation 'bravery' may be brought out into the open. But not only does this confuse metaphor with simile, as one of Martin's authorities, Christine Brooke-Rose, has pointed out: it is founded upon an impossibility, namely the theory that concepts are formed by an 'abstracting' process of not concentrating on individual characteristics. It is a pity that, though he has read the book, Martin has not noticed page 84 pf Geach and Black's *Translations* from Frege, where the latter says wryly 'Inattention is a very strong lye: it must be applied at not too great a concentration, so that everything does not dissolve, and likewise not too dil-

ute, so that it effects a sufficient change in things. Thus it is a question of getting the right degree of dilution: this is difficult to manage, and I at any rate have never succeeded'. This abstractionist theory of universals has a long, if dishonourable history in logical theory, and seems a poor basis for a theory of literature. I am not sure how far Martin's general thesis can stand once this foundation stone is shown to be nothing but sand: but I fear the damage may be extensive, though many good things are said along the way, and the range of reference is extremely wide. Particularly good use is made of the author's knowledge of French as well as English literary sources.

BRIAN WICKER

SELF-DETERMINATION IN SOCIAL WORK. ed. F.E.McDermott. *Routledge and Kegan Paul,* **London and Boston, 1975. viii & 244 pp. £4.80.**

This is an admirable collection of papers or extracts from books. (With a couple of exceptions, all are noted as already published.) What is admirable about it is that it juxtaposes treatments of 'self-determination' by social work theorists and practising social workers with academic philosophers' treatments of concepts often presupposed in discussions of self-determination. Through the juxtaposition, the issues debated by the social work theorists -- or in some cases the issues they should be debating -- come out more clearly; and the treatments by the philosophers can -- often -- be seen to be using models which are too "thin", too simplified, to be applicable as they stand to the world of practising social workers. Pressure to consider "thinker" models of concepts supposed applicable to human affairs is more acceptable in moral philosophy today than it was in the days when philosophers appeared to agonise over extra helpings from overstocked donnish tables; and more philosophers (thanks, it should be added, to the tools sharpened by the donnish agonisers) need not be the losers by ceding to such pressures. I hope that the collection will also be welcome among social work theorists: more attention to points of the kind made by Sir

Isaiah Berlin or Professor McCloskey, for example, could have enabled them to avoid a certain amount of old-fashioned muddle which appears in too many places in their writings, including those presented here.

Papers or extracts collected here are: FP Biestek's, from *The Casework Relationship;* S.Bernstein, 'Self-determination: king or citizen in the realm of values?'; A Keith-Lucas, ' A critique of the principle of client serf-determination'; D. Soyer, 'The right to fail'; H.H. Perlman, 'Self-determination: reality or illusion?'; C Whittington, 'Self-determination re-examined'; R.F. Stalley, 'Determinism and the principle of client self-determination'; F. E. McDermott, 'Against the persuasive definition of "self-determination"'; I. Berlin, 'Two concepts of liberty'; H.McCloskey, 'A critique of the ideals of liberty'; H.L.A.Hart, 'Are there any natural rights?'; J.Wilson's, from *Equality;* A.I.Melden's, from *Rights and Right Conduct;* and finally, S.I.Benn, 'Freedom and Persuasion'. The book also has an introduction by the editor, a short bibliography and an index of names.

I commend the collection to moral philosophers and social work theorists alike.

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