

FOI SANS METAPHYSIQUE NI THEOLOGIE, by Dario Antiseri. Translated from the Italian by B. Vinaty, *Les Editions du Cerf*, 1970, 175 pp., preface, bibliography.

The principal purpose of the present volume, Professor Antiseri tells us in his preface, is to provide information about the present discussion of religious language within the tradition of linguistic philosophy. With this end in mind, he surveys the development of analytic philosophy from the Vienna Circle through Wittgenstein and Austin to the falsification controversy. Almost half the book is devoted to the challenge laid down by Antony Flew and the responses to that challenge, first, from Hare, J. Smart, E. L. Allen, McPherson, Holland, Braithwaite, Hepburn, MacIntyre and Zuurdeeg (whom he characterizes as providing the left-wing response) and, then, from B. Mitchell, Hick, Crombie and I. T. Ramsey (the right-wing response). Then he turns his attention to the American death-of-god movement, especially the work of Paul Van Buren, and to Frederick Ferré's transposition of the doctrine of analogy from the material into the formal mode. In two concluding chapters, Doctor Antiseri offers a few observations of his own: faith is an assent to non-evident truths which we accept as true because of the confidence we place in someone as their witness; the witness, of course, is Jesus Christ, and the logic of faith is to be modelled upon the logic of testimony; finally, we are urged to realize that we are religiously at a turning point, and that theology may well have to abandon metaphysics for the analysis of language.

I find Professor Antiseri's use of the terms left- and right-wing unfortunate. The term 'left-wing' was, I think, first employed by Passmore of McPherson, and then extended by W. T. Blackstone to include all non-cognitive theories of religious meaning. Blackstone further used the appellation 'right-wing' to characterize the cognitive theories of religious language. Antiseri acknowledges his debt to Blackstone, but it would have been better had he avoided altogether this misleading terminology. In such a schematization, R. Hare, whose intention in proposing his theory of *bliks* was to defend orthodox Christianity, including its dogmatic statements, against Flew's attack, ends up on the left, while John Hick, whose doctrinal positions often place him squarely in the tradition of liberal Protestantism, finds himself on the right. It may appear prosaic, but it is also more accurate to divide the responses to Professor Flew's

challenge into interpretations of the meaning of religious language as cognitive and as non-cognitive.

On pages 49–52, the author provides an extremely dubious interpretation of what linguistic philosophers mean by 'ordinary language'. He equates the term with 'everyday language'. Donald Evans, in the introduction to *The Logic of Self-Involvement*, was at pains to point out that this is not what analytic philosophers mean by 'ordinary language'. 'Ordinary', here, refers to first-order as opposed to second-order language. As a consequence, it might very well be very technical language if one is analysing, for instance, the ordinary language of physics. Evans suggested that ordinary religious language could be found in the Bible. The point, however, is clear. Generally speaking, philosophers of religion in the linguistic tradition mean by 'ordinary religious language' the kind of talk believers make use of when they are going about religion as a way of life (as opposed to their explanations of how religious language operates).

Finally, I would like to pose two questions for Professor Antiseri in regard to his conclusions. First of all, he tells us that the logic of faith is to be compared to the logic of testimony. He likewise tells us that his personal position has been partly derived from Ferré's re-interpretation of the Thomistic doctrine of analogy. But if the logic not only of faith, but also of its expression in religious language is that of testimony, has not Professor Antiseri placed himself in the tradition of Karl Barth and not that of Saint Thomas? It may very well be true that one must appeal to authority in order to justify our talk about God. But if so, one has an analogy of faith, and not an analogy of being. Secondly, if Christian theologians turn to linguistic philosophy, are they thereby compelled to abandon metaphysics? If so, how does Professor Antiseri explain a collection of essays such as *Prospect for Metaphysics*? Wittgenstein told us that the analysis of language must concern itself with depth, and not just surface, grammar. It would seem, then, that metaphysical questions, which have perdured over the centuries, must reappear in some form or other in linguistic philosophy.

In spite of these animadversions, Professor Antiseri's book is recommended to the reader. The book covers material which has already

been treated well *and* in English, but the book is not without interest to the Anglo-Saxon reader. It is thoroughly documented, and the numerous footnotes and ample bibliography will provide the specialist with a welcome listing of growing literature in Italian and

French on linguistic philosophy of religion. With the exception of his interpretation of 'ordinary language', Professor Antiseri's survey is an extremely accurate and thoroughly clear presentation of the recent history of the analysis of religious language. DAVID STAGAMAN, S.J.

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