

Religious Studies 58 (2022) doi:10.1017/S0034412520000311
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Susannah Ticciati *A New Apophaticism: Augustine and the Redemption of Signs*. (Leiden: Brill, 2013). Pp. 259. £112.00 (Hbk). ISBN 9789004257719.

This is an excellent contribution by a theologian on a topic which, for all its rootedness in religious traditions, receives not nearly enough attention from philosophers: apophatic theology. Apophatic theology, for these purposes, is theology which claims there are severe, and non-accidental, limits on our capacity to speak of God.

That way of delineating the subject matter of her book might be insufficiently robust for Susannah Ticciati. She is impatient of formulations of apophaticism which allow that we might nonetheless be able to speak somehow of God, and even of claims that the failure of theological language points beyond itself to God. In no way, she holds, do linguistic expressions refer to God, and in no way, not even at the limit, does language represent God. This is a radical apophaticism, according to which, understood as a referential activity, theological language is simply a failure.

On this point, of course, atheists would agree. But Ticciati is a Christian theologian, and one steeped in patristic and mediaeval tradition at that. Accordingly, theological language's referential failure is not the last word. Rather, we should focus on the role of God-talk in transforming human beings. Human beings themselves are potentially signs of God, and transformed redemptively we become better signs of God. Our use of religious language, in all its variety, is part and parcel of this redemptive process.

That theological language might have functions other than purely representational ones remains an under-emphasised point within analytic philosophy of religion, and philosophers would gain a lot from engaging with Ticciati's argument. She introduces her case by critical engagement with contemporary apophatic theologians (Burrell, Lash, and Turner); this part of the book would by itself be useful for those interested in apophaticism. She goes on to develop her own position through a close engagement with Augustine on predestination (a choice of interlocutor that ought to give pause to anyone who thinks that apophaticism is a marginal concern within Christian tradition) and with semiotics.

This reviewer is one of the lukewarm apophaticists of the sort against whom Ticciati's enjoyable book takes aim. I want to be able to say that we do not know what God is, and yet that we manage to say true things of God. Treading this tightrope has historically been the role of the doctrine of analogy, and I remain convinced that, however treacherous the walk, it is one that must be undertaken. That is because I think the applicability of the concept of truth to (at least some) religious language is itself religiously important, and I do not see

how Ticciati's apophaticism can allow that we say true things of God. But it is good to be challenged not to rest complacent in our entitlement to truth-claims.

I began by saying that philosophers do not pay enough attention to apophaticism. We do not. A good way to begin to set that right would be by learning from this book.

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