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UNITY THAT HONORS DIVERSITY:
PERENNIALISM AND METAPHOR

This paper (1) explores a Perennialist quest for unity among religions which "honors the world's diversity without falling prey to relativism" (Huston Smith 1989: 13). The way chosen for pursuing that quest is indicated by the metaphoric character of many religious utterances.

If some of the emphasis (and some of the pain) in the paper is to be understood, one needs to know a little about the situation in which it was presented: the morning of the third day of the 1990 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion held in New Orleans, Louisiana. Twenty-four hours earlier, an intense debate occurred over *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, a collection of essays edited by Prof. Robert Forman. Ewert Cousins, Robert Gimello, Huston Smith and Steven Katz argued over Forman's effort to find in mystical experience a unity which honored diversity (2). Because of its alleged failure to honor diversity, Perennialism was condemned as a "borderless desert". Because of its alleged failure to recognize unity, the constructivism of Katz was criticized as a set of "windowless rooms" preventing any serious comparative study of mystical traditions.

Dizzy and a little dismayed from the debate, a half dozen members of the AAR Esotericism and Perennialism Group stumbled off into the city's French Quarter to recover over lunch. There atop the menu of the G and E Courtyard Grille, floating like a banner, was this proclamation:

"To define a cuisine would take a novel. To define a style is like wearing a leash. Freshness and simplicity are not just common terms used to describe great cooking. They are goals great chefs work a lifetime to reach."

"Unity that honors diversity" may be such a cuisine; Perennialism may be such a style (with the implied risk in definition!). Evidently one can work a lifetime in this quest, so strong resolve is needed if one is to pursue it. How fortuitous that a restaurant menu would provide a sage oracle at this turn of the quest!

The quest is not merely an academic one, nor is it an optional one. One
contemporary fact of extraordinary importance is that interreligious dialogue is occurring. Not all parties to the morning’s debate had recognized that (3).

Further, the fact of interreligious dialogue implies a crisis in the best sense of the word: a decision, a turning point. What is at stake for each particular tradition is suggested at the close of R. C. Franklin’s contribution to The Problem of Pure Consciousness – honoring diversity “questions something precious to the self-understanding of many traditions: their conviction that they [each] are the true path to salvation”. “Whether this treasured belief must be abandoned”, continues Franklin, “seems to me one of the deepest issues in understanding mysticism” (301).

At issue in this crisis is not just the academic stress on unity or on difference; it is a choice between community and conflict (4).

The Perennialist quest, aptly defined in that morning’s debate by Huston Smith, is to formulate some basis for a unity, a common center. In the present crisis, then, Perennialism is called upon to point out a way so that community might prevail over conflict.

At the same time, the Perennialist quest must honor diversity, or it gives credence to the charge that it is a borderless desert in which the distinctive elements of particular traditions are buried or blown away. There is merit to the charge (5). My own participation in this quest began as a protest against the violence done to the Christian by conceptual schemata advanced by some Perennialist writers. It appears that the struggle for a unity which honors diversity is at the same time a struggle to define a “nonviolent” Perennialism quite different from the “borderless desert” caricature that was pilloried in the debate on Pure Consciousness.

I have proposed that the offending schemata (indeed most religious utterances) should not be given the status of descriptions of the way things are, but should rather be considered as metaphor – reality-depicting in their reference, but tentative and revisable in descriptive content (6).

A positive step at this point in the Perennialist quest is to pursue the implications of the metaphoric character of religious utterances.

This approach promises to be a more fruitful alternative for Perennialists than the “pure consciousness” approach. While that approach responds effectively to constructivism on its own turf, from a broader perspective it gives away too much and it risks too much.

It gives away too much by accepting the constructivist assumption that any experience marked by intentionality is mediated by particular beliefs and so cannot be universal (7). One needn’t find a “contentless” pure consciousness experience in order to meet this challenge; one needs only to distinguish reference (intentionality) from mediate content (8).

The “pure consciousness” approach risks too much by suggesting that one class of experiences is normative (9), and therefore that other kinds of
religious and mystical experiences are of lesser importance (10). Our challenge, after all, is to honor diversity while seeking unity.

An approach based on the metaphoric character of religious utterances can balance unity with diversity. Further, it suggests a programme and method which can enrich each of the world’s particular traditions while fostering a growing community among them.

Unity may be found in the reference of diverse metaphors, and unity as well in the process rather than the diverse content of religious utterances and experiences. Further, such an approach suggests an understanding of truth which may be more primordial than any correspondence between conceptual schemata and a putative “way things are” (11).

The first step in this approach is to distinguish the reference of statements from their descriptive content. It is necessary to go beyond the “Descriptive Theory of Reference”, according to which words refer to objects through clearly defined, unrevisable descriptive content. More fruitful is a “Causal Theory of Reference”, according to which words refer to objects through “their causal-historical connections with those objects” (Miller 3f). But most essential is to see reference as essentially related to context, i.e. to actual utterance of words by persons in a social setting (Soskice 124-31) (12).

With that first step, the context of our understanding of language changes. No longer are we dealing with propositions and definitions (perhaps typically expressed in texts). Rather, we have to stand as persons speaking in an ongoing community of discourse: statements cannot be removed from persons, nor persons from communities, nor communities from history, nor history from a shared world (Soskice 151, Perovich 71). Indeed, that realization already unveils one dimension of unity among religions (13).

The next step is to recognize the distinctive way in which metaphoric language refers. I adopt the definition of metaphor by Janet Martin Soskice: “metaphor is that figure of speech whereby we speak about one thing in terms which are seen to be suggestive of another” (15) (14). The descriptive content of metaphoric speech (those terms which are seen to be suggestive of another) can then be clearly distinguished from its reference. Indeed, in the phenomenon of catachresis, metaphor may successfully refer to something which (as yet) cannot be described (Soskice 61-64), e.g. the use of the term “charm” in microphysics. Metaphor may therefore successfully refer to an unknown (e.g. in science an as – yet – undefinable theoretical postulate) in terms suggestive of the known.

Further, metaphoric reference is fertile: metaphor brings about greater knowledge and insight into what is referred to by providing models for interpretation and “possibilities of explanation” (Soskice 114-117). Metaphor “provides a perspective from which to gain understanding” of what is referred to (Kittay 13-14).

But – here is the third step of our approach – what of reference to what
cannot be known, to what is absolutely ineffable (15)? A causal theory of reference enables one to say of "ineffable" mystical experiences and of their descriptions that "God" (or fill in the appropriate metaphor) is whatever is at the source of this experience (see Soskice 152). Further, a causal theory of reference enables one to say of religious speech with highly diverse content that "Whatever is the source of an experience described in X terms by a Buddhist may be the same as whatever is the source of an experience described in opposite terms by a Christian" (see Perovich 75; Miller 13-14). Such statements reach toward the center. And such questions are indeed arising in interreligious dialogue.

Two considerations follow from this third step. First - a direction pointed out by Perovich - we are presented with an ongoing task of identifying what counts for indicating similarity among different experiences, for claiming a common source for diverse experiences (75). For the source of the Christian experience may /not/ be the same as the source of the Buddhist experience. Further, enthusiastic "highs" of religious groupies probably arise from a source quite different from the experience of an authentic Christian mystic even though the metaphoric expression may be the same. Not all spirits are the Holy Spirit; not every pointing finger is pointing at the moon (16).

A second consideration is that we are confronted with the paradox of metaphoric language which actually refers, but which refers to no thing. We meet a pointing finger with no perceivable moon.

That consideration leads to a second mode of unity in diverse religious experiences: a unity that can be discerned in the process underlying metaphoric religious utterances which have diverse, mediated content.

If an utterance is a "pointing finger" and it refers to no thing, then at the very least that utterance places speaker and hearer in the situation described by Martin Heidegger as "pointing into what withdraws" from disclosure, indeed "pointing into the withdrawal" (9-10). For Heidegger, this pattern is typical of thought and of truthful language (language that emerges from meditative thinking and so houses the event of Truth, i.e. the revealing/concealing advent/withdrawal of Being), not only of mystical language.

If such pointing beyond characterizes the process of metaphoric utterance, it is a short step to recognize here an echo of Meister Eckhart's insight that God is no object but is that presence within which all consciousness is (For- man 9) (17).

Such indicators in the process underlying diverse metaphoric utterances suggests a foundation for unity among the world's religions which rests on the most ordinary process of the diverse experiences and expressions of all particular traditions. Unity is not to be found in the content, but in the thinking, acting and living out of particular traditions (18).

So far, approach based on the metaphoric character of religious utterances
finds a direction toward unity in the reference of diverse metaphors and as well in the process rather than the diverse content of religious experiences. Further, such an approach suggests an alternate understanding of truth.

Typical definitions of truth assume a descriptive theory of reference: a proposition refers through the defined content of its terms; the proposition is "true" if its reference so defined corresponds to an empirically verifiable state of affairs, or to "the way things are" (19).

But metaphoric utterances, according to Soskice, "can be reality depicting without pretending to be directly descriptive, and by doing so support the [...] right to make metaphysical claims" (145) (20). Metaphoric utterances are therefore cognitive, though in both the religious and scientific realms the cognition is a "docta ignorantia" (see Rothberg in Forman 190-91). Further, the reality depicted in metaphoric utterance need not be limited to what may be described or defined within human experience. The believer speaks not only of the human condition, but "about states and relations which he knows himself not fully to understand but which he takes to be more than simply human" (Soskice 107).

If we reflect upon this sense of reality depiction and realize at the same time that the reality so depicted is no thing, "truth" then has less to do with validity than with revelation. Persons so speaking in a community do not convey information explaining states of affairs; they experientially awaken their hearers and bring about an event of realization, recognition.

There is a troubling question of validity that remains. If reality depiction rested on reference rather than on definition, then how can one distinguish a valid metaphoric depiction of God from an invalid one (21)? A response to that question depends on an understanding of how metaphors are controlled within a particular cumulative tradition. But that brings us to our next major consideration, i.e. how an approach based on metaphor suggests a programme and method which can enrich each of the world's particular traditions while fostering a growing communion among them.

The Perennialist quest is not only a theoretical one; it is a response to the present crisis. In this crisis, then, how are these insights to point out a way so that community might prevail over conflict?

First a reminder and a caution: we stand as persons speaking in an ongoing community of discourse that occurs within a shared history and a shared world of experience. There is no accepted Archimedean standpoint apart from particular traditions from which one might legitimately pass judgment, and efforts to affirm and define such a standpoint risk producing the "borderless desert" style of Perennialism. Rather, one has a particular perspective which is both productive of insight and subject to question. But one need not be imprisoned in that particularity as in a windowless room. An appropriate method must enable each of us to stand firmly and
richly but critically in our own particular traditions while seeking to foster a growing community among traditions (22).

An approach based on metaphor can first help perennialists to enrich and to purify particular cumulative traditions.

A particular tradition develops, Soskice suggests, as metaphors arise in a community attempting to articulate experiences "judged to be of God". "Over time, there comes into being a rich assortment of models [metaphors] whose sources may be unknown but which have been gradually selected out by the faithful as being especially adequate to their experience" (153). This "revelation" (23), often expressed in "privileged texts", then becomes the basis of the ongoing development of the tradition (24).

The tradition is enriched as this privileged assortment of metaphors provide perspectives that enable the ongoing community to gain understanding of changing experiences, and to deepen understanding of that to which the metaphors ultimately refer (25). There results a growing tapestry composed of "gloss upon gloss" through which succeeding generations of faithful are guided to understand and experience "God" and to interpret their changing historical experiences (Soskice 158-59).

Two factors appear to control the selection and interpretation of metaphors in the development of traditions: the interrelationship of metaphors already in the tradition, and the experiences of the faithful in the tradition. The troubling question of the validity of a metaphor is addressed by these factors – what constitutes a "better" or "more adequate" metaphor for "God", and how one distinguishes the "finger pointing at the moon" from misdirected pointers.

The metaphor of "our Father" for God is not likely to mislead Christian believers into imagining that God had to have a wife (Soskice 116). Other metaphors already in the tradition, such as Spirit, systematically act to limit the extension of the metaphor so that the believer would recognize the absurdity of an inappropriate extension.

Soskice stresses that the experience of the faithful is the "touchstone" of such a metaphoric tradition. Experience is interpreted by privileged texts, texts in turn reinterpreted by experience of persons in the historical community – and this grounding and regrounding of metaphors in experience ensures their referential character (159). In relation to the metaphor of Father, believers’ experiences of what they take to be God would provide a ready basis for recognizing "the kind of being that becomes a father by physical wiving" as inadequate.

As an example, the Book of Job might be read as the testing of an inadequate metaphor against the experience of the faithful, and its replacement with a more adequate metaphor. Job begins (chapter 3 on) with the metaphor of God as just judge who rewards the righteous and brings suffering to the evil. Since the righteous man Job suffers (as believers experienced the
suffering of the righteous), he presses the metaphor to the point of evident absurdity, trying to serve a subpoena on God and sue him for specific performance (especially chapter 23). Through Job’s encounter with God in the whirlwind (38-42), a more adequate metaphor supercedes: God as Lord of the Universe whose ways are beyond understanding. Job’s response, humbled awe before the majesty of God, expresses an “event of truth” suggestive of reference rather than descriptive content (“But now my eye has seen you” 42:5) and so more adequately reflects the believers’ experience of God, an experience going beyond any definable content (26).

While consistency with experience does appear to control the development of metaphor in a tradition, simple logical consistency appears to have little to do with the process. Logically opposed metaphors, such as freedom and predestination in the Christian tradition, continue to be affirmed because together they adequately reflect the experience of the faithful over long periods of time. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the logic that does govern metaphors is not that of noncontradiction, but a logic of coincidence of opposites: i.e. that two opposed metaphors are valid only if both are affirmed at once, and neither is valid without the other (27). Opposites then are defined in terms of each other: Human freedom is understood as “not in a sense that excludes predestination”, and predestination “not in a sense that excludes freedom”. Thus control is exerted, and perspectives are opened that call to deeper insight.

It has frequently happened, however, that the revelatory power of a tradition’s metaphoric system becomes dimmed. A faith community may simply forget a revelatory metaphor, particularly if other metaphors have superceded. Perhaps we can recognize this process in the forgetting of the Passover by the Israelites (2 Kings 23:21-23) when their religious consciousness was dominated by royal theology and temple theology. Or the experience of the faithful may be foreclosed in some way, perhaps through a dogmatic mistaking of metaphor for descriptive speech. Foreclosing the element of experience removes that essential control and weakens the sensed reference of metaphor, and so a faith community’s living experience can be alienated to some degree from its receive tradition. “Reform” may later occur, consisting of a remembering of the forgotten (2 Kings) or in the reassertion of experience and of the metaphoric rather than descriptive character of utterances in the tradition. If what is forgotten remains so, a tradition can develop a “blind spot” (perhaps the current difficulty of the Roman Catholic community regarding the role of women is a symptom of such a blind spot) (28).

Esotericists and Perennialists can foster the enriching and purifying of particular traditions in at least three ways. First, through awareness of basic (archetypal?) patterns of metaphor in world traditions, e.g. hierarchy, perennialists can note expressions of these patterns that are perhaps forgot-
ten in a particular tradition and they can interpret to that tradition the importance and the implications of the patterns. Second, through the esotericist insight that religious expressions are indeed metaphor and must be transcended, perennialists can undercut a naive realism that mistakes metaphor for description and so can open believers to the event of revelation. Third, through appreciative research of voices speaking but unheard in a tradition, perhaps reflecting experiences foreclosed, esotericists may provide a voice for those alienated within a tradition and so foster recognition, remembering and reform.

Finally, and most relevant to the crisis presented by interreligious dialogue, an approach that stresses the metaphoric character of religious utterances can help to foster growing community among particular traditions.

First, such an approach provides a perspective on what is happening in the contemporary dialogue of world religions. If Christians, for instance, accept as really possible that the reference of Buddhist utterances about ultimate emptiness may be the same as the reference of their own utterances about ultimate union with God, then the control patterns already noted within particular traditions begin to operate across the traditions: the metaphor of emptiness becomes a control and a new perspective for interpreting Christian metaphors of fulness and Being. “God is Being, but not in a sense that would exclude the Buddhist ultimate emptiness”, and the like. Christians then have the challenge to reexamine the shape and implications of such a qualified metaphoric utterance. Three developments in Christianity appear to be resulting from such encounters: one, a shedding of “naive realism” in understanding Christian utterances like “union with God”; two, a rekindled interest in some Christian mystics, e.g. Meister Eckhart, whose interpretive insights present a perspective on the major Christian metaphor that is more open to the Buddhist metaphor; and three, a “testing” of some nonChristian metaphors against the experience of Christians.

The Perennialist perspective can contribute to this process in three ways. First, perennialism works to overcome exclusivism in a religious tradition, fostering the recognition that there should be community rather than conflict among religious traditions. Second, the perennialist conviction that there is a unifying center to be sought can strengthen the quest of that to which varied metaphors refer without foreclosing a definition of its nature (beware the borderless desert). Third, perennialist schemata expressing putatively universal patterns can assist in generating criteria for what counts as similar in experience and in utterance. (Ensure, of course, that the schemata are never considered other than abstractions, perhaps archetypes and definitely issues of importance, which in no way supercede the specific metaphoric utterances rooted in particular traditions.)

A presupposition of such dialogue is that each tradition retains its own integrity, and that persons recognize that they stand in particular traditions.
rather than having some vantage point beyond the traditions or merely being eclectic. The challenge of the dialogue then demands that each tradition renew its recognition of its own *essential* metaphors, and then take the risk of allowing essential metaphors of other traditions to exert some control on its interpretation of itself.

In the consequent struggle, a kind of spiral process appears to be occurring: encounter with other traditions prompts identifying and reexamining of essential metaphors within a particular tradition; that reexamination permits greater openness and so a deeper encounter with other traditions; that deeper encounter in turn prompts an even deeper reexamination, and so on. This process should lead toward a deeper realization of the distinctive identity of a particular tradition, and at the same time toward a closer communication across traditions.

It appears then that the crisis presented by interreligious dialogue calls for undertaking a *quest* — a growing conviction of identity in the *reference* of different metaphoric utterances, a growing compatibility in the mutually controlled content of these utterances, and a growing communion among those drawn into what is now becoming a shared spiritual journey for all humankind.

Such unity that honors diversity is proposed as the Perennialist quest: a growing community among communities rather than xenophobic conflict; a deepening dialogue among particular traditions rather than a borderless desert of uniformity or a desolate suburb comprised of isolated windowless rooms.

And these are not just common terms used to describe great cooking. They are goals great chefs work a lifetime to reach.

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NOTES

(1) This paper, presented at the Esotericism and Perennialism Group (AAR Annual Meeting, November 19, 1990), was written with assistance from a Dean's Faculty Research Grant from Teikyo Marycrest University, Davenport Iowa.


(3) Steven Katz, for instance, using the “windowless rooms” image, said that what is happening in the *other* rooms is not Theresa of Avila's question, but only the scholar's. However, the new fact is that not only scholars but “practitioners” and mystics are in dialogue (a fact that
Ewert Cousins' remarks strongly affirmed. Shouldn't all scholars permit this new fact to be included in the data?

(4) In the November 18th AAR session, Huston Smith asked Steven Katz, "Do all mediations divide? Or do some draw us together?". Katz replied by pointing to recent unhappy events in India and in the Middle East, and indicating that history tells us that mediations divide. The Perennialist quest for unity is at least a hope to the contrary, at least a hope that division and conflict among religions are not the last words. This hope is bolstered by the new fact apparently ignored by Katz, i.e. that interreligious dialogue is occurring.

(5) Wilfred Cantwell Smith warns, "... it is not the case that all religions are the same. Moreover, if a philosopher ask (an historically) what they all have in common, he or she either finds the answer to be 'nothing', or finds that they all have in common something so much less than each has separately as to distort or to evacuate the individual richness and depth and sometimes grotesqueness of actual religious life". Toward a World Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 5.


(7) In The Problem of Pure Consciousness, see especially Bernhardt's discussion, p. 221-223, and the definition by Prigge and Kessler, p. 274-75.

(8) See Soskice 140: the "separation of referring and defining is at the very heart of metaphorical speaking and is what makes it not only possible but necessary that in our stammering after a transcendental God we must speak, for the most part, metaphorically or not at all".

(9) R.L. Franklin's essay in The Problem of Pure Consciousness recognizes this risk in no uncertain terms: the pure consciousness approach, he says, "still concludes that one animal is more equal than the others. And I still feel for those traditions which will see it as only putting a feather mattress on a Procrustean bed" (300).

(10) In The Problem of Pure Consciousness, Donald Rothberg suggests widening the inquiry beyond pure consciousness events to "paths of deconstruction" in religious (and other, e.g. aesthetic) traditions which lead beyond ordinary consciousness (195); Robert Forman recognizes "sahaja samadhi" as a more developed and integrative stage of mysticism (8). Elsewhere, Richard Jones notes that pure consciousness events ("depth mysticism") are temporary, whereas "nature mystical" experiences tend to transform the total conscious life of a person (139). Clearly these are important experiences.

(11) See Huston Smith, Primordial Truth and Postmodern Theology, 179.

(12) Miller and Soskice refer to theories of Kripke, Putnam and Donnelan; Soskice refers also to the critique of the causal theory by Jerrold Katz. Escaping the descriptive theory enables scientific language to refer when descriptive content is incomplete or mistaken; and it also means that descriptive content is reversible without altering reference. Further, more directly relating to the Perennialist quest, this move undercuts an assumption beneath both constructivism and the Pure Consciousness approach, i.e. that descriptif content (or lack thereof) is the relevant aspect of mystical utterances. For instance, overcoming the descriptive theory of reference would help solve the puzzle of intentionality in description of contentless experiences (Bernhardt in Forman 221-223). As it is, Bernhardt has to deny that mystics mean what they say in describing their experiences.

(13) See Wilfred Cantwell Smith's observations concerning the historical interconnections evident not only within particular cumulative traditions but among them - "strands in a still more complex whole" (5-6).

(14) Soskice's definition is designed to avoid a hasard of traditional theories of metaphor (e.g. "comparison of unlike things"), which posit a double reference to objects.


(16) This challenge is partly a function of a weakness of the causal theory of reference (see
Soskice 129-130), and partly a form of the age-old challenge of discerning spirits. Both suggest the need to stress the communal context of religious utterances. For an excellent example of what is involved in meeting this challenge of identifying what counts for sameness, see John Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger’s Thought* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978).

(17) Eckhart’s insight places us within the illumination traditions, particularly close to Bonaventure’s contemplation.

(18) Obviously the unity is more comprehensive than religious traditions: this consideration suggests a unity undergirding all deeply lived human experience, an insight consistent with the illumination traditions.

(19) Perhaps one source of difficulty for current Perennialism is the acceptance of that definition of truth. Huston Smith assumes it in *Forgotten Truth*, asserting that his hierarchical schema is Truth because it describes The Way Things Are (preface and chapter 1).

(20) Soskice deliberately avoids the language of “truth” and prefers “reality-depiction” precisely in order to avoid any confusion with a correspondence theory of truth (Letter of 23 May 1990).

(21) This question is raised in a review of Soskice’s book: Theological Studies 47: 523.

(22) See Franklin’s comments in Forman, 300-301. Note that “our own particular traditions” must be understood loosely to include modern skepticism and persons prophetically responding to limitations within particular traditions.

(23) “Revelation” is intended here in a sense different from the event discussed above. Further, Soskice clearly rejects the idea of revelation as a “body of free-floating truths” disconnected from a historical community of faith and so able to be found, e.g., in Shakespeare just as well as in the Bible. Such a notion of revelation misses the way that privileged texts (like the Bible) are immersed in the ongoing life of historical communities and thereby misunderstands the essential rootedness of revelation in particular traditions (153-155). This criticism appears to hit a Perennialist habit of identifying “truths” or conceptual schemata which float above particular traditions, and so echoes the warning of Wilfred Cantwell Smith (note 5 above).

(24) In religious communities, unlike scientific ones, metaphor is embedded in ritual and ethical patterns as well, engaging all dimensions of persons in their ways of life. Analysis of the metaphoric character of religious utterances focuses on one relatively intellectual dimension of a much more complex reality in order to affirm that religious utterances are reality depicting and in order to ground moderate claims of a transcendent unity among religions. This approach may not go far enough, however, for it does not appear to do justice to the sense of believers that through symbol, ritual and practice one not only cognizes but participates in that which is not only referred to by symbols, but embodied in symbols. The claim of this study is only that an approach based on metaphor is philosophically fruitful for the Perennialist quest, not that it provides a fully adequate theory for interpreting religions.

(25) A “perspectival theory of metaphor” offers this sense of the function of metaphor (Kittay 13-14). Soskice discusses this phenomenon as the fertility of metaphor (114-117).

(26) Ironically a later writer presses that metaphor – Archibald MacLiesh, *J. B.* – finds “Lord of Universe” inadequate in a scientific age and so justifies the rejection of faith. Might this be a case of fixating on the content of the metaphor (God as explanation of nature) and missing the reference? While MacLiesh’s invalidation of the description content of the metaphor may be perfectly apt, a believer can correctly see that MacLiesh missed the whole point of Job.


(28) This “blind spot” may be present in the New Testament, itself a collection controlled by the acceptance of a faith community influenced by patriarchal attitudes in the first-century Graeco-Roman world. Current interest of feminist scholars in apocryphal writings of the intertestamental period may indicate an effort to compensate for that limit. If indeed a substantial
facet of a community's experience is excluded from exerting any control in that tradition's development, it would seem that a blind spot is virtually guaranteed, hiding from a community its own full tradition and so creating alienation and division within that community.

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