Movement from allegory to metaphor or from metaphor to allegory?
‘Discovering’ religious truth

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ABSTRACT
The above issue not only immediately confronts one with the conundrum of the modal relationship between these two literary phenomena, but also with the epistemic status of allegory. In spite of its traditional pejorative connotation, it is made clear that the use of allegory should be a well-accepted literary technique. This is not only indicated by a more postmodern approach to the theory of literature but also by more profound considerations, such as those of the ‘discovery’ and ‘generation’ of religious truth. Allegory is epistemically activated and justified by metaphor to also have a function in the area of religious belief. A précis on traditional and modernistic viewpoints on allegory is followed by the more postmodern appreciation of this as a literary phenomenon, linking it to metaphor. An attempt is made to indicate the literary ‘operation’ of allegory through metaphor, and the particular heuristic it could provide for the religious belief of its readers.

1 APPRECIATING AND DEFINING ALLEGORY
Generally speaking, anyone who has undergone training in a Protestant faculty of theology or in a seminary, will know the resistance to allegorical reading of Scripture, or the even more frowned upon practice of sermonising by means of allegorising. This ‘abhorrence’ of allegory is usually based on the notion that the objective meaning of Scripture is being violated; and this in turn was originally based on the reinforcement of the Protestant sola scriptura legacy. Furthermore, the practice of allegorical reading, and the allegorising process appears /ed to be avoiding listening to God’s address to humanity.

1 Except where the context indicates, nothing ‘ideological’ is intended by the use of the term Scripture/s. It is merely a metonym for the writings or books contained in the Bible.
2 Louth (1983:96) refers to ‘our own embarrassment about allegory’. He remarks thus in reference to allegorical practices by the fathers.
3 As Louth (1983:98) points out, this is a legacy often unexamined. The notion of sola scriptura suggests that the truth of the Christian religion is contained in the scripture of the Bible, and only in the Bible. Other latent areas of knowing, such as tradition and the sphere of worship, are completely discredited or disregarded.
Even currently, the practice of allegorical reading and allegorising within a wider ambit than in the reading of the books of the Bible, is still sometimes frowned upon as an unwanted and unwarranted practice.

1.1 Defining allegory

The complexity of the phenomenon of allegory can only be truly appreciated when one makes a number of distinctions:

(a) There is the usual understanding of allegory as a trope, where it merely indicates figurative use of language. In this case the author and the interpreter who understands the allegorical meaning are participating in the same activity, albeit it from different directions. In this case the usage is more illustrative, albeit obscure.

(b) The particularly biblical use and understanding of allegory, which could be related to typology (cf 1.1.1 below): This usage includes the well-known differentiation of the four interpretations of Scripture: the literal; the allegorical (illuminating human life on the pattern of the life of Christ); the tropological (providing moral lessons), and the anagogical (which points to divinely inspired truth).

(c) A more extensive sense: In this case allegory fulfills the role of a 'representational narrative'. This is where allegory represents or explains 'other' dimensions of life, as well as provides perspectives which give 'meaning' to life; such allegories could actually explain all of life's experiences, including the spiritual and the theological. One thinks of the famous classic literary works of Dante and Milton (the two paradise allegories, and John Bunyan's Pilgrims' Progress). It is especially this usage that links up with the concept of metaphor, where the 'meta-narrative' supersedes isolated use of allegory. As will be seen (in §2, below), this understanding, especially in the light of postmodern viewpoints of language and literature, could actually lead to a far more pervasive view of allegory.

It is clearly valid to distinguish between the extensive (narrative) understanding of allegory and the use of allegory for isolated applications of

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4 This use concurs with a rhetorical use on a 'surface' level, such as is indicated by Trypho (first century BCE) when he said: 'Allegoria is speech which makes precisely clear some one thing but which presents the conception of another according to likeness to the greatest extent' (cf Rollinson 1980:112). Longinus again regarded it as a means of gaining attention: '[A]llegoria adorns speech by changing expression and signifying the same thing through a fresher expression of a different kind. For that which is commonplace, threadbare and endlessly repeated leads to satiety' (quoted by Rollinson 1980:112).

5 In this case the treatment by Madsen (1994) is invaluable.
language (cf e.g Madsen 1994). In the extensive sense, allegory is or becomes a literary or philosophical mode of seeing and living, through reading and understanding as epistemological means. Moreover, it indicates an "...insight into an intrinsic relationship between the signifier and the signified, an external comparison, often a structure of comparisons in narrative form" (Harris 1992:3).

Since the narrow and the extensive manifestations of allegory exist contiguously, and since both these manifestations of allegory are encountered in the Scriptures, it would be felicitous to study the occurrence of both within the writings of the Bible as a religious book.

The following important phenomena, ancillary or contiguous to allegory, should also be looked into: typology, symbol and then of course the very important relationship between allegory and metaphor.6

1.1.1 Allegory and typology
All kinds of finer distinctions7 have been drawn between these two phenomena, especially when it comes to the interpretation of the writings of the Bible. But in the tenor of the approach followed here, it is maintained that these are often arbitrary and tenuous. The so-called 'types' of the Old Testament are in any case not events, which are 'recorded that purely,'8 but these recordings are the stories or narrations of the events, and the significance that is attributed to them in narration. Following Henri de Lubac,9 Louth suggests that true allegory does not lose all contact with the fundamental, with the 'factual'. Bede (cf Harris 1992:5) appears to have suggested the same: 'Factual allegory, found in biblical events that, while accepted as historically true, are intended by God to be understood allegorically, is the same as typological interpretation.'

Therefore in no way do these distinctions influence the present viewpoint/s on allegory; in fact in many ways the so called types may be subsumed under the notion of allegory.

6 Since the relationship between allegory and metaphor is a major facet in the incumbent essay, particular attention is to be given to this relationship below in §3.
7 Louth (1983:118ff) points out, that although some persons such as Cardinal Jean Daniélou drew a very rigid distinction between these two phenomena, e.g that typology is a 'good phenomenon' which deals with history, allegory is a broad category which only deals with words; '...allegory elides history, typology is rooted in history.' Typology is in fact of recent coinage (1840 and 1844; Latin and English respectively).
8 Such a possibility obviously does not exist, since all recording is influenced by ideology and the like.
9 The latter distinguished between allegoria facti and allegoria verbi. A similar distinction was made by the Venerable Bede (cf Harris 1992:5).
1.1.2 Allegory and symbol

These two concepts have been used interchangeably during most of the history of Western literature. According to Harris (1992:7), not even Philo or Plutarch appears to make a distinction between allegory and symbol, and until the end of the eighteenth century they are used synonymously.

A number of literary critics defined symbol as the opposite to allegory in its functioning within literature. Thus Coleridge (cf Harris 1992:7), for instance, points out that by a symbol he does not mean metaphor or allegory, but an ‘...actual or essential part of that, the whole of what it represents.’ A similar distinction is drawn by C S Lewis (cf Harris 1992:7), when he maintains that an allegorist would relinquish the given, to talk of that which is less real, namely ‘a fiction’. The symbolist again leaves that which is given, to find that which is even more real. The relationship between allegory and symbolism can be defined on the basis of their respective relationships to the signified and signifier. In the case of allegory, there is no real relationship between signified and signifier; whereas in the case of symbol, the relationship arises out of underlying links between signifier and signified which suggest a rich variety of interrelated meanings.

However, there is already a ‘postmodern’ tenor to the critique of Helen Dunbar (in 1929) on previous distinctions between allegory and symbol, when she identifies different descriptors. To her mind the insight type of symbol or allegory expresses and reaches out toward the supersensible or then 'suprasensible'.

However, in some respects (for instance the so called anagogical use of allegory) ‘...it reaches out to beyond any direct one-to-one relationship between an abstract concept and its embodiments in a more concrete literary representation’ (Harris 1992:7).

1.1.3 Allegory and myth

This connection is likewise very important in the study of the phenomenon of allegory; in fact, when it comes to the matter of meta-knowledge (knowledge beyond the obvious), the relationship of allegory to myth is as important as the relationship of metaphor to myth. Suffice it for now, however, to

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10 This is a fairly ‘modernist’ distinction, in that it simply relegates allegory to that which is ‘less real’ and to ‘fiction’ (Harris 1992:7).

11 The others are arbitrary or extrinsic, descriptive or intrinsic. She subsumed allegory and symbol under the term symbol. Although others such as Scholes and Kellog make a different distinction, such as between ‘illustrative’ and ‘representational’ narratives, Fletcher and Adams also reconflate allegory and symbolism (Harris 1992:7–8).
point out that in this relationship there is also often a reliance of allegory on a *meta*-narrative. Furthermore, there could be a strong connection between allegory, myth and *religious belief*. What unites these three phenomena, is humankind's quest to know the unknowable; thus an epistemic quest for truth or reality. Allegory, like myth, is a 'mechanism/means' created in order to explain or to come to know 'meta-reality'. In the words of Kilby (1974:120ff),

> [w]e intellectualize in order to know but, paradoxically, intellectualization destroys its object....So what is to be done? Man finds himself a third characteristic called imagination by which he can transcend statements and systems. By some magic imagination one is able to disengage our habitual discursive and system-making habit and send us on a journey toward gestures, pictures, images, rhythms, metaphor symbol, and at the peak of all, myth.

This signals the area of contiguity between myth and allegory.

In conclusion, on account of the various contiguities between allegory and other literary phenomena, the question may well be asked as to whether there is still any sense in speaking of 'allegory'. This question should obviously be answered in the positive, since there are characteristics of allegory that never seem to be completely subsumed under the other phenomena. By way of negation one may delimit allegory as follows: The closer, the more directly recognisable, the correspondence between the signifier and the signified is, the less allegorical a narrative appears to be; however, the more the signifier differs from the signified, the more untenable this relationship becomes, and the stronger the allegory (cf Harris 1992:7).

Furthermore, allegory can also function in the extensive sense as a reflection of a 'symbolic universe', which warrants the recognition of this phenomenon.

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12 By 'religious belief', I do not have a particular Christian tradition in mind, but intend this to be understood generically: religious belief as a universal phenomenon.

13 This connection seems to be especially made in the area of literature studies (cf the introduction in Van Dyke 1985).

14 This may be understood on more than one level, one of these levels being the meta-'physical', in a religious sense.
1.2 Allegory through the ages\textsuperscript{15}

1.2.1 In Antiquity

Although a certain philosophical basis underlay the use thereof, Aristotle indicated allegory more as a trope (figurative use, from Latin \textit{tropus}) than anything of wider significance.

In its most basic (and etymological) sense, it refers to the phenomenon "where one thing is said but another thing is meant", and on the textual level this takes place by means of parallelism or analogy. In the latter sense it came to be associated with \textit{hyponoai}; the finding of underlying or hidden meanings (Rollinson 1980:5). This practice is generally attributed to the Theagenes of the sixth century BCE, and was well-established by the time of Plato\textsuperscript{16}. It was apparently the Stoics who, during the fourth and third centuries BCE perfected the modes of allegorising Homer. Somehow there was an ameliorisation of these tales by means of the practice of allegorising, which had by then become commonplace.

1.2.2 In both Testaments of the Bible

Most students of the New Testament are aware that the authors of some New Testament writings interpreted sections and ideas of the Old Testament allegorically. However, even in the Old Testament itself allegory is used and this takes place on various levels. One may refer to the ‘parable’ (allegory) of the vine in Isaiah 5. In this instance the vine stood for the planting of God, namely Israel—and one may embroider yet further on many of the details. One may also think of the ‘allegorical significance’ of the tabernacle and the Temple and that these two localities ‘stood for heaven and heavenly worship’.

Allegorical interpretation became more pronounced when the Old Testament was allegorised within the writings in the New Testament. In spite of applying this understanding, Christian writers do not seem to deny the historicity of the events recorded in the Old Testament. They do however, find new meanings which those who wrote were not actually aware of. This kind

\textsuperscript{15} Entire monographs have been devoted to this aspect, e.g: Wernle 1960, \textit{Allegorie und Erlebnis bei Luther}; Rollinson 1980, \textit{Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture}; Wailes 1987, \textit{Medieval Allegories of Jesus’ Parables}. For now it merely needs to be observed that this is a literary phenomenon that has received much attention through the ages.

\textsuperscript{16} Plato rejected teaching children such tales as that of the narrative about Hephaestus who bound Here his mother, or Zeus who would have sent him flying for taking her part when she was being beaten; Plato also added about these tales, ‘...whether they are supposed to have allegorical meaning or not’ (2:20; 378d, cf Harris 1992:3-4).
of reading, however, only takes place on the basis of an interpreter's own preconceptions of what truth and the nature of reality is, whether in the physical, the psychological or the metaphysical realm. Examples that come to mind are: The reference to the period for which Jonah was in the belly of the whale, and the period which Jesus would spend in the grave; Paul's reference to the veil which covered Moses' face (2 Cor 3), and the reference to the two women in Galatians 4, namely to Sinia (=earthly Jerusalem) and Zion (=the heavenly Jerusalem).

1.2.3 Rabbinic Judaism
Although we still have difficulty regarding the dating of early Jewish sources, allegorical interpretation (along with the typological) was also part and parcel of midrashic exegesis—even in an extreme measure. However, in Jewish tradition this practice was infinitely more widespread (e.g. Philo's De Abrahamo).

1.2.4 The early fathers
Following in the wake of the writers of the New Testament, the early fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, Tertullian and Origin) resorted to allegorical exegesis to explain their theology as well as to refute their opponents. Thus the fathers worked out their theology in the context of the interpretation of Scripture, but they did not really record how they set out about this task (Louth 1983:99). No doubt a possible resurgence in Hellenism may have caused an assimilation of elements from Hellenism.

1.2.4 Medieval\textsuperscript{17} Enlightenment and thereafter
Christianising allegory was applied to Greek and Roman myths throughout the medieval period and a tremendous amount of allegorising took place during this era. In spite of this, it seems as if the task of the 'medieval theologian' was to establish the 'objective meaning' contained in the Scriptures.

Although not strictly Enlightenment, the reaction of Protestantism as it is expressed by Luther, for instance, already signals the aversion to allegory. Louth (1983:98) points out that Luther\textsuperscript{18} was fundamentally and deeply

\textsuperscript{17} Strictly speaking one would want to separate the late medieval from the next historical phase. However the Enlightenment clearly has its roots in the medieval.

\textsuperscript{18} Apparently this debate did not prohibit Luther from resorting to allegorical interpretation from time to time.
opposed to allegory. Luther expresses this in his tract against the Louvain theologian, Latomus. He was also fundamentally opposed to the concomitant idea of the multiple senses of Scripture. It appears that Luther himself, though, did speak about the *mysticism* attributed to the early fathers of the church.\textsuperscript{19} The aversion to allegorical interpretation was yet further strengthened on account of the resultant rationalism,\textsuperscript{20} which followed in the wake of the Enlightenment. Following a number of epistemological quests (such as Romanticism for instance), there came the historical-critical approach, which in its idealism had to provide the most reliable, and thus objective knowledge of the writings of the Bible.

\subsection*{1.2.6 Historical-critical approach/es and allegory}

This approach with its proclivity for the objective and endeavour to discover the historically reliable (the ‘original context and meaning’) was very instrumental in the rejection of allegory as a way of reading.

In Protestant circles in particular, with a strict sense of Aristotelean logic established by the link between ‘cause and effect’, there was this overly strong aversion to the use of allegory in interpretation.

Louth (1983:28) points out that the historical-critical\textsuperscript{21} method in the humanities can lead to a ‘kind of canonization of the present’.\textsuperscript{22} If in anything, there is an escape from this false endeavour in what Gadamer calls the striving after ‘Bildung’ rather than after the method of the sciences. The historical-critical approach is very much reminiscent of the scientific method.

According to Louth’s (1983:106–108) reasoning, Gadamer points the way forward:

\begin{quote}
[It is in] the idea that in interpreting a piece of writing it is not a matter of my attempting to reconstruct the original historical context in which it was written and thus divine what was originally meant in an act of imagination, but rather a matter of my listening to what was once written, listening across a historical gulf
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} This is pointed out by Keble (cf Louth 1983:98), in reference to Luther’s *Tracts* 89 and 90. This mystical sense of Scripture would then refer to the use of ‘allegory’.

\textsuperscript{20} This swing of the pendulum to rationalism was obviously in some way corrective, but nevertheless lead to intolerance and fragmentation.

\textsuperscript{21} The historical-critical method is in actuality an attempt to accomplish what the scientific method wants to, when it is endeavouring to reach objective truth. The avoidance of this false attempt lies in the humanities striving for a reality that is more transparent to us, a transparency reflected in the human achievement of language and literature (Louth 1983:34–35; cf also :41–42).

\textsuperscript{22} In reference to Voltaire’s use of the principle of *le bon sens* (good sense) where sense canonizes only that which it finds credible; thus the past is measured in terms of the present.
which is not empty, however, but filled with the tradition that brings this piece of writing to me, and brings me not only that piece of writing but preconceptions and prejudices that enable me to pick up the resonances of the images and the arguments used in whatever it is I am seeking to understand.

It should be pointed out that to Gadamer this tradition may be more meant in a 'secular sense' rather than in a 'theological sense', since he was a student of Bultmann and Heidegger.

2 A POSTMODERN APPROACH TO LANGUAGE AND THE THEORY OF LITERATURE

2.1 The effect of postmodernity on reading literature

True to the nature of postmodernism, there is no monochroic interpretation of what postmodernism could be. Some characterise it as a 'paradigm' or an ideology, others a new era, others as a phenomenon of non-seriality in which there is no beginning and no end; where everything is coterminous.

The beginnings of this 'movement' or perspective are indicated variously. Suffice it to say, that like many universal phenomena, its roots will lie far and wide. For one thing, the movement which started with Humanism and the Enlightenment is sometimes commonly called the 'modernist project', and the assumption is that since this movement follows onto it, it should be called the 'postmodern' movement. One of the turning points indicated as its beginning,23 is the disillusionment in the modernist project after the Holocaust (cf Docherty 1993). In fact, the observations stemming from postmodernism are mainly the shortcomings and voids observed by those who have been working within the ambit of 'modernism'; thus a kind of reaction.

By way of argument, one may ask: 'Why a postmodern perspective?' Among others I would like to answer in the words of Ward (1996:132ff, quoting Bauman): 'Postmodernity, one may as well say, brings 're-enchantment' of the world after the protracted and earnest, though in the end inconclusive, modern struggle to dis-enchant24 it.' It is the re-evaluation of ambivalence, mystery, excess and aporia as they adhere to, are constituted by, and disrupt

23 Personally, I think that this could have been an important turning point in the philosophical history of the world. However, this should not be seen so much as a definite and rigid historical era or specific period, as a way of thinking and seeing which coexists with, in a sense, its antipodal phenomenon—'modernism'.

24 He also refers to Max Weber who declared that the world conjured by technology was a disenchanted world. Ward observes that science, the spirit of techne, empiricism, positivism and materialism offered to explain the world and managed to erase the mystery. This observation obviously does not intend wholesale decryal of modernism; it does however, serve to expose its hubris.
the rational, that lies behind the re-enchantment of the world. Reality is no longer tabulated and evaluated in terms of empirical fact. The following observation is apropos to my presentation: ‘The world is multiple worlds; and worlds are created by, and shift within, nets of signs and symbols *pointing beyond themselves* towards other nets of signs and symbols’ (Ward 1996:132-133; italics mine). In this view there is a new dynamic allowed to serve as a means of orientation, in which; ‘[t]emporality rather than spatiality, economies rather than places, narrative rather than nouns are the vehicles for identity and meaning’ (:133).

This phenomenon or way of understanding has had an impact on a wide range of facets: architecture, art, music, natural sciences, the interpretation of history, other cultural artifacts (such as the interpretation of gender and race and so on) and then of course on literature.

It is necessary to indicate some of the ‘tenets’ of postmodernism which have their impact on the aforementioned areas, and also on literature. Some relevant tenets of this ‘project’ which also impact on ‘other’ understandings of literature are as follows:

*Decentering the centre:* No longer are there absolutes, for example, in the defining of genre. Genre is no longer treated as a stable core of the text (cf Madsen 1994:7). Documents and meaning in documents need no longer be constrained by strictures imposed on them by delimitations on account of some observations of generic characteristics, however functional these may have been in the past.

*Concentrating on the subject and the process of understanding rather than the ‘product’.* It is no longer the document as end product that is being studied as a fixed and fossilised entity, but the process and flexibility of understanding (then and now). The datum of the forever-gone original context is now taken seriously when reading. Furthermore, the reading and understanding of texts is a *holistic* matter, in which it is recognised that there are many factors and variables that influence the coming about of a *text*. In fact, the idea that a *text* is a most encompassing notion is assimilated; is taken more and more seriously.

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25 These can only be broadly indicated, since not all those who advocate these modes of thinking think alike, neither has there been a concerted effort to standardise postmodern thinking.

26 A number of ‘schools’ or ‘movements can be identified, which more or less stem from postmodern thinking, and influenced the way in which language as well as literature can be observed. The most significant are: new criticism, structuralism, poststructuralism, reader-response, reception-aesthetics, and ‘new rhetoric’.

27 In the Latin sense of *texere*: a coming together of numerous and different threads.
Tolerance: Tolerance of the belief, understanding and interpretation by others ('the other') is respected, even if it is done critically. This would also apply to literature and language.

The nature of language: Language and its usage is seen as 'an event', rather than a static entity, and what has become important in the study of the function of language is the how, rather than the what; how is language implemented in a given instance rather than merely the study of lexical meaning; and so on. One cannot stand outside a language to understand it (cf also Appignanesi & Garratt 1995).

2.2 The influence of postmodernism on the interpretation of allegory

Maureen Quilligan\(^{28}\) sums up the effect of a reader-response perspective on the reading of allegory. When one thinks of a 'higher level' as it applies to the reading of allegory, one should not think in terms of levels, in the sense of one level as vertically organised fictional space, but rather in terms of the higher level applying to '...the self-consciousness of the reader, who gradually becomes aware, as he reads, of the way he creates the meaning of the text.'

In contradistinction of symbol to allegory, one may refer to De Man's (1969) observations regarding allegory, which indicate some of the more postmodern and positive viewpoints regarding allegory. He endeavours to reverse the viewpoints dominating the phenomenon of allegory for the last number of centuries. Arguing from the point of view of deconstruction and intertextuality, he maintains that allegory which always depends and openly refers to previous usages of the signs that it employs, is indeed more truthful than, for example, the use of a symbol where there is some pretense of symbol to establish unchanging identity.

His postmodern stance forces him to shift focus from the usual question of whether symbol can actually express transcendental truth, to that of whether language can in any way accurately express any aspect of extralinguistic reality. De Man rather celebrates the honesty of allegory in which image and substance do in any case not coincide:

Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and renouncing the nostalgia and desire to coincide, it establishes its language from the voice of temporal difference....it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self (as referred to by Harris 1992:8-10).

As with the challenge to previously held notions of language, so there is also a challenge to change previously held rigidity which dominated view-

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\(^{28}\) In her *The Language of Allegory*, as cited by Harris (1992:10).
points which determined how one should define and delimit genre/s (cf Madsen 1994 on this point). This rigidity now has to make room for more flexibility, and this will also open the way for a more expansive understanding, in which allegory does not only occur within various genres, but actually constitutes a genre by itself. Maureen Quilligan (1979:26) advocates the same, when she argues that allegory is not merely a mode that can be operative in a number and variety of genres, but that there is a true genre of allegory; and that essentially '...the term “allegory” defines a kind of language significant by virtue of its verbal ambidextrousness....'

This in a sense coincides with the observation in the above (§1, above) that there is this expansive and pervasive view of allegory. However, this observation presupposes more than previously held notions of allegory: it now legitimises allegory as a way of knowing. When a reader or an interpreter discovers or imposes an allegorical meaning, then it leads to the discovery or generation of new information. Therefore allegory should not only be regarded as a well-accepted literary technique, but even more than that, as a literary technique which carries epistemic possibilites.

The question that should now be asked is whether this 'knowledge' does not remain mere 'literary knowledge' and it is here where the relationship between allegory, myth and metaphor becomes significant, if not crucial.

3 ALLEGORY'S RELATIONSHIP TO METAPHOR

3.1 On metaphor

Allegory is sometimes defined as 'extended metaphor' or even a sequence of extended metaphors (cf Harris 1982:6ff29). Although it was noted in the above that there is a wider use of allegory in the sense of representative narrative, it is clear that the whole of such a narrative could hardly be a single metaphor, or as Harris points out not 'even a consistently linked set of metaphors'.

Prior to defining the relationship of allegory to metaphor, one needs to define30 one's understanding of metaphor.31 In straightforward and more postmodernist ways, metaphor should be defined in an epistemic and

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29. He refers to the very old work of George Puttenham (1589), in which the latter had already defined allegory in terms of metaphor.

30. As with virtually all linguistic and literary phenomena, so also with metaphor, an entire plexus of important phenomena converge, such as: metaphor and rhetoric and metaphor and metonymy. Although these are equally important for this study, they will have to be ignored for the sake of space and time.

31. Metaphor as a literary device has been identified and defined at least as early as Aristotle; however, as a mode of expression it must antedate Aristotle’s discussion indeterminably. From Aristotle to contemporary times this phenomenon has been hailed in lofty terms. Aristotle acclaimed it as the highest of forms of expression:
heuristic sense. Metaphors play an indispensable role in the way in which reality represents itself to us. They are "...not simply embellishments of what could be equally easily stated in plain literal prose" (Louth 1983:19). They disclose a way of observing and understanding reality and the world at large.

Although metaphors may: (i) be simply defined as rhetorical devices which facilitate in the giving of names which belong to another thing, for the sake of emphasis; or (ii) may be considered to be tropes in which one thing is referred to in terms of another, in a way which jars semantically, then triggers meanings which cannot merely be deduced from dictionaries. There is infinitely more to metaphor, linguistically, lingually, cognitively and literary.

As with allegory, where one can stress its extensive and pervasive application, so one can also emphasise similar facets in the use of metaphor. A metaphor does not only entail the bringing of two words together, but involves infinitely more than this, since it actually involves the relating of two or more clusters of associations. In the words of (Harris 1992:223-24), it is a "...borrowing between and intercourse of thoughts, a transaction between contexts." Another person to take this notion of reciprocity or interaction yet further, was Max Black (cf Harris 1992:224ff).

In a postmodern sense, it was Searle and Eco who took matters yet further (cf Harris 1992:225). Searle (1979:287), drawing on Speech-Act Theory, rejects the notion of substitution or comparison. He maintains that the dif-

[T]he greatest thing by far is to be master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others; it is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of similarity and in dissimilars' (cited by Harris from: 71:1459a). More recently in the words of Eco (1984:87): "The "most luminous and therefore the most necessary and frequent" (Vico) of all tropes, the metaphor, defies every encyclopedic entry. It has been the object of philosophical, linguistic, aesthetic, and psychological reflection since the beginning of time,..." It is especially in the last fifty years that substantial attention has been given to its formal study.

32 Heuristic is one of those coinages which probably primarily functions within the ambit of theology (and maybe philosophy). The notion underlying it is generally of hermeneutic importance, when it serves to refer to an approach or steps within an approach which, when applied, can lead to discovery of knowledge from the biblical writings. In a more philosophical sense it would apply to a wider field of literature than only the books of the Bible.

33 Cf also the epoch making book on metaphor by I A Richards (1936), in which he presents some definitive theory on the subject.

34 Thus he argued that in the metaphor: 'The man is a wolf', the characteristic commonly associated with wolves, becomes the filter through which man is viewed. 'The wolf-metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others—in short organizes our view of man' (Harris 1992:228). Apparently Kenneth Burke advocated similarly that metaphor is a device for seeing something in terms of something else, and it is a device which gives perspective by incongruity.
ference created by a metaphor, is not between the usual meaning of the words and their meaning in metaphorical utterance, but between sentence meaning and utterer's meaning; thus in their interpretation, metaphors have another meaning even than their sentence meaning. Eco (1984:127) advanced on this: 'Such markers are both connotative and denotative, the connotative ones representing culturally determined associations' (my italics). In a metaphor such as 'Richard is a fox', Richard and the fox share the same semantic markers both connotatively and denotatively; however, the connotative markers convey culturally determined associations. He advocates that '[t]he success of a metaphor is a function of the sociocultural format of the interpreting subjects' encyclopedia [mental inventory of definitions and associated qualities]. In this perspective, metaphors are produced solely on the basis of a rich cultural framework.' (Eco 1984:127).

To conclude, one needs to take cognisance of the complexity of the phenomenon of metaphor. This complexity involves the relation between one meaning of a word and the meaning of a sentence, and also what a speaker or his/ her utterance may mean. This cannot only be as simple as lexical and cultural meanings, since there is also the meaning of the totality of the speech-event. Yet, interpreting metaphor implies more than merely experiencing the 'obscuring of language'. In more postmodern terms, it is realised that all human understanding of reality is interpretive; we construct all this reality (however, it may exist 'out there'). Harris (1992:227), referring to Black, points out that the role of metaphor in this is to 'create' a similarity rather than formulate similarity. In the same vein, Ricoeur believes that metaphor creates new information, since it tells something new about reality (1976:52-3).

Cohen (in Harris 1992:222ff) maintains that metaphor is the one means (device) whereby language, in spite of the putative limits assigned to it, can actually say something new. Lakoff and Johnson (according to Harris 1992:227) argue that metaphors do not only help us to construct our understanding of reality, since even thinking as such is structured metaphorically.

Thus metaphor is not only lingual expression which carries with it more than it pretends, but in its interpretation can actually lead to new information, in a kind of generative sense.

\[35\] By that I am not denying that there could be a convergence of experience and observation; after all, it is this principle that makes communication possible.

\[36\] This observation of course does not deny that metaphors do not only construct our understanding of reality, but also confuse and obscure at times.
In the end one may ask whether any amorphous view of metaphor would not render its identification obsolete; or does not a more constructivist view of metaphor (as is found among some postmodern advocates) render its very definition obsolete. It appears not to be the case, but rather that there should be more flexibility and more openness in its interpretation and reading; one should be prepared to take it out of the mere arena of language and semantic selection, and be prepared to observe that it can also be founded on sense impressions (Gumpel, as referred to by Harris 1992).

3.2 On the nature of the relationship between allegory and metaphor
Three questions need to be answered regarding the nature of the relationship between allegory and metaphor:
(a) The first is regarding the literariness of both phenomena. On the one hand, it is clear that allegory can sometimes be wholly subsumed under metaphor. Yet one needs to be careful not to negate all distinctions. Figural allegory (Harris 1992:6), is for instance, not always a metaphor.
(b) The next question is whether the relationship between allegory and metaphor is merely a literary relationship; or is there a more profound level of contiguity, such as a contiguity in essence? In as much as one assumes that language represents or reflects reality, however it does this—inclusive of religious reality—it does all somehow reflect or represent reality. Allegory and metaphor, in as much as both do create a new understanding, reflect or represent a ‘meta-reality’ (extra-linguistic). This extra-linguistic, can of course be anything from mere emotions, to extrasensory, to being an ‘index to the supernatural’.
(c) The third question to be answered is: In what way does allegory operate through metaphor; or metaphor through allegory? In as much as both can supersede reality through what is encapsulated in lingual symbols in a text, the reality referred to by each phenomenon can in fact become the other.

3.3 The literary ‘operation’ of allegory through metaphor; metaphor through allegory
In his chapter, ‘The Legacy of the Enlightenment’, Louth (1983:18–19) reminds the reader of the protest by Giambattista who questioned the

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37 Louth (1983) in *Discerning the mystery. An Essay on the Nature of Theology*, does not explicitly take a postmodern tack. However, in his evaluation of an Enlightenment (modernist) viewpoint of allegory, he comes close to this in many respects. The main underpinning for his plea is maybe not so much literary (although it is ancillary to this) as ‘religious’, hence the notion of the ‘mystery’ as the point of convergence of all thinking. A commonality which, however, does underlie both his ‘theological’ basis and this paper’s more literary basis, is that of epistemology. In this chapter he deals
Enlightenment ideal of *progress toward clear, objective knowledge of the world.* He points out (no doubt on account of Augustine's observation[^38]) that when it comes to nature, as God's creation then there is no possibility of complete knowledge. There is a difference to some extent with regard to human history though, since humanity is itself involved in this history. However, even the understanding thereof can only take place through an appreciation of metaphor, since this is facilitated in the way in which reality represents itself to us.

In allegory's co-role and contiguity with metaphor lies its particular heuristic, namely that it functions not as the acquisition of 'exact, logical and deductive thought' (Vico referred to by Louth, 1983:19), but rather as knowledge acquired by an effort of sympathy and *imagination.* Away from mere objectivistic categories of knowledge, this allows for certain epistemic possibilities.

### 4 EXAMPLE OF ALLEGRO/ISING FROM SCRIPTURE

#### 4.1 Example

Obviously the writings of both the First and Second Covenants abound with examples of allegory. There are not many, however, where the operation of allegory through metaphor is so clear as in Galatians 4:21-5:1.[^39]

When reading 4:24 'This is an allegory...', a modernist purist would immediately shrink at the ostensible 'violation of historicality', since it would appear that the mention of the two women as allegory (as that which has a deeper significance than the obvious) is a denial of the historical existence of the women. Whether it be a denial or not, it is clear that the author means for it to be both rhetorical and an allusion to a known story about Abraham's two wives. Moreover, the impact of the entire section is not only to convince by means of an illustration from the wider history of Israel, but it is to 'carry' (metaphorically) the readers to a meta-level of 'reality' in which they were desirous to share—to be affirmed children of God. Which

[^38]: That one can only know something fully if you have made it yourself.

[^39]: The reader is advised to turn to this text, since it is not provided in this essay.
‘reality’ is to lead them to rejoicing because of the reality of their status (cf 4:27ff.). This status especially resides in the freedom which their status effects. Although explained by means of an allegoroumena, to the readers (and all those who would share the same symbolic universe), this is an ontological reality: this explanation affirms, that by their faith or belief in Christ they are sons (children of Abraham) and thus children of God. Moreover, they are no longer slaves, as those who are dictated to by the former dispensation of the Law in Israel. Therefore they will rejoice in this knowledge. Given the possible rhetorical situation, there is no doubt that this ‘explanation’ by means of allegory, operating through the ‘metaphorical realities’ which could serve as an index of a certain metaphysical ontology, would not have caused them to be joyously confident in their lot.

4.2 Enter the ‘Third Dimension’

If from a theological perspective one holds to the conviction that faith (belief or trust) can be an epistemic faculty or means to come to know an unknowable reality, however incomplete this knowledge may be, then it is exactly here where allegory and metaphor may facilitate. The possibility for this is also clear from the one example from Galatians (cf §4.1, above). If as was argued in the above, in both the instances of allegory and metaphor there are the possibilities and potential of suprasensory reference, a definite ever evading reference, then it is exactly here where the two literary phenomena can become a heuristic for ‘religious knowledge’. This is especially so when allegory ‘represents’ a reality which in its turn is ‘created’ metaphor. Thus there is a kind of symbiotic relationship between allegory and metaphor.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 In the religious arena, allegory is epistemically activated and justified by metaphor and belief

In the case of the writings of the Bible (here the New Testament in particular), there is nothing that can prove anything, but faith (belief in a religious sense) will have to, as ever assume or presuppose its certainties. In every age allegory and metaphor can be an ‘index’ and a heuristic of the knowledge of the Triune God and His world, and all that it entails. This understanding creates the possibility of ‘creating’ (or no, ‘discovering’!) this meta-narrative anew or afresh in each age.
5.2 Epistemic 'status' of allegory and religious belief: 'the mystery of Christ'—Louth

Obviously, any epistemic status appended to allegory can, to say the least, only be assumed within a 'wider context of understanding' than that allowed or presumed by, for instance, historical-criticism.

To add a further 'epistemic angle' to allegory, one may once again turn to Louth (1983:121). He accepts the basis of the mystery of Christ to be the underlying metanarrative which was prefigured in the Old Testament, and is '...still realized, actualized, and achieved in the Christian soul.' Louth argues that read in this way, allegory is not arbitrary, since it is firmly related to the 'mystery of Christ'. It does not prove anything, however, but then it is not meant to.

This is all subsumed under the notion that '[i]ndeed the literal meaning of the New Testament is itself spiritual, it is the record of the fulfilment: it is novissimum not just novum.' Thus argued, the 'nature of the knowledge' is not historical, neither is it objective, but it contains a certain 'empiricalness' which resides in the spiritual; which although it may appear ethereal to the modernist, nevertheless communicates an aesthetic and spiritual reality.

5.3 The particular heuristic it could provide for the religious belief of its readers

The metaphors which reveal to us the world of thinking of the ancients should not be seen as ingenious conceits of individuals, but as the reflections of the common sense, of the sensus communis (cf Louth 1983:20).

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40 'Status' is purposefully typographically indicated as a misnomer in the context of this paper. Since 'status' would again smack of objectivistic notions as the only tenable canons which can be applied.

41 The notion of 'wider understanding' is advanced by Louth (1983:106) on the basis of Gadamer's proposition. In the case of Louth, tradition (on the basis) of Gadamer is the operative passe partout that could unlock this. On the basis of what is argued in this paper, I would particularly also fit this into the notion of a different understanding of literature as that advanced by historical criticism and other objectivistic viewpoints of literature.

42 He turns to the famous, often unread, work by Père Henri de Lubac, Exégèse Médiévale: Les quatre sense de l'Ecriture (three volumes which appeared 1959-1964) to argue his case.

43 I interpret this to be a meta-narrative.

44 Samuel Mather (cf Harris 1992:5), appears to have already advocated a similar notion in 1705: i.e the literal meaning of the biblical narrative is actually spiritual.

45 This is prior to reflective intelligence, and forms the basic preconceptions of a culture or a society (cf Louth 1983:20).
Thus, as a possible heuristic, allegory demands the same ‘openness’ as any other literary phenomenon, since it can never been seen in isolation, but in respect to its author together constitutes the epistemic and ontological possibility. In the words of Hodges (cited by Louth 1983:22) in his study on Dilthey:

I see a human figure in downcast attitude, the face marked with tears; these are expressions of grief, and I cannot normally perceive them without feeling in myself a reverberation of grief which they express. Though native to another mind than mine...it none the less comes alive in me, it sets up an image or reproduction of itself (Nachbild) in my consciousness. Upon this foundation all my understanding of the other person is built.

This capacity to relive the experience of another is what gives one access to the minds of others; however, this is a complex process.

Rather than merely reasoning in a logical way, reading allegory requires a ‘process of imaginative amplification’ (cf Louth 1983:23). Dilthey comes in close proximity to what one may call ‘postmodernist epistemological’ considerations. He identifies three fundamental attitudes to the world: naturalism, the idealism of freedom and objective idealism. Even the latter is based on the experience of the self as a whole and this idealism sees in the universe a wholeness and living unity like that of the self. Although this can lead to the phenomenon of cultural relativism, it does tend to sensitise an interpreter to other experiences of reality (be they physical or metaphysical). In this way one’s own claim to objectivity is no longer the sole criteria whereby one can judge knowledge.

5.4 Reciprocal movement

In answer to the original question, it appears to be a valid assumption that there could be a reciprocal movement; from allegory to metaphor, and then from metaphor to allegory. The first is an ‘epistemic movement’ in which allegory is subsumed under the wider meta-carriage, called metaphor, and the second a ‘literary movement’ in which metaphor can find a legitimate expression in the manifestation of allegory. In the first movement a meta-reality is presupposed. In the second movement the concretisation of metaphor is sometimes manifested in allegory. If the underlying metaphor is manifest of a meta-reality, then appreciating the allegory, can lead to an enrichment and even an enlargement of religious truth, since this is the meta-reality which is embodied in the metaphor. It is in this way that appreciating

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46 I particularly use *appreciate*, in contradistinction to *analyse*.
the allegory can lead to 'discovery of religious truth', since the allegory is reciprocal to the metaphor.

Furthermore, read in the atmosphere of literary wholeness and tolerance: No! Read away from the intolerance and vaunted presupposition of historical-criticism, allegory both as a literary manifestation, as well as a manifestation of a meta-reality, is both felicitous and in fact demanded.

WORKS CONSULTED


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