

While I'm the panel's final commentator and therefore have no need to do anything thetic, this thinksheet represents my anxiety that without distributing something on paper, I may not say enough in the meeting--which my wife says is highly improbable, and occurs not more than once in each decade. In short, I am very Jewish, according to the goy stereotype of the Jew, and therefore love Mel Yosso for his passion and push, which is almost at the intensity of the biblical prophets, which got them killed even by Jews. Which leads to my first point:

1. Mel is a hot pusher of a cool medium. While this is a contradiction, it is not hypocrisy. It takes fire to ignite tinder, and the cool-insensitive-deaf world needs fire to renew communication, to motivate to truly human listening across lines between the tribes of race and religion and nation and ideology. As my judge-father used to say, "Consider the alternatives." What passionless alternative holds forth any promise of moving forward any of our currently anguished dialogs--woman/man, Jew/Christian, Arab/Jew, Buddhist/Christian, capitalist/communist, philistine/avant-garde, black/white, anglo-hispanic, or what have you?
2. I have used the allegories under many different circumstances and with a wide variety of humans--racial, ethnic, and however you slice it. Without detailing, let me say only that they've always paid off. My old teacher Fritz Perls used to say, "Have you discovered something?" And I can say that all groups and individuals I laid an allegory or two on have discovered something. I only wish I'd had this tool earlier--say, when teaching at the U. of Hawaii the world's great religions, where it might have prevented my Buddhist students from falling in love with that damned snake in Gen.3. [In a course on conversion, in which I passionately preached all the world's great religions, five Japanese Buddhists got converted to Judaism, though more got converted to Jesus than to anybody else--as a passionate evangelical Christian I tried not to load it for Jesus, but probably didn't succeed.]
3. As a biblical theologian who did an additional doctorate in motivation research so as to be able to address the pollution of the motive in the ground of our beseeching [an off-version of T.S.Eliot's "purification"], I have for the past quarter-century as teacher, pastor, and staff person at the national level of UCC, been "exploratory" (and am now called, at NYTS, "dean of exploratory programs") toward a new integration of justice and joy (the root and fruit of biblical religion) in holistic consciousness (which I have termed at the individual level "the interfunctioning of the coils" and at the collective level "the emergence of global awareness"). I'm finding that the allegories encourage my project by gently raising the question of total contexting, a maieusis of one's own myth toward deepening-widening-heightening one's model of life/world through revising one's paradigms (one's own constellations of images/ideas, galactically planetary to one's centering myth [i.e., one's way of seeing the world]). This brings me to the thesis of this thinksheet:
4. As a Christian theologian, set as such for the defense of the biblical faith in the Creator who suffers with the creation toward its shalom, I must--while saying a loud YES! to Mel Yosso's tool--say a quiet NO! to the gnostic metaphysic which grounds, engines, and envelopes it in his all-consuming vision. Mind you, not no to his having a metaphysic: everybody has! But no to this particular metaphysic which through all the centuries we Jews and Christians have had to fight off while appropriating as much as does not replace the Creator/creature distinction. Our firstborn is about to be graduated with a thesis in religious epistemology, in which he expositis the dynamic--by his studies in drug experience, in religious conversion, and in experiences associated with death--by which the monistic thesis, the heart of gnosticism, unconsciously establishes itself. Since the MODEL by which one lives is a rational construct of the STORY-MYTH within the limits of the PARADIGMS [i.e., the presuppositions/expectations/plausibilities], and since reason is continuous, the metaphysical notion of continuity tends to get built into models in the form of advaita ["non-dualism"], in philosophy called "monism." Hinduism, Buddhism, all gnosticisms proclaim monism not as option but as truth, and this dogma we peoples of the Book must set ourselves against on pain of unfaithfulness to our Covenant Lord. But Mel's tool, instead of being inherently monistic, itself favors world humility and dialog.