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BOOK REVIEW:

Spiritual consciousness as evolutionary learning: myth, metaphor and magic for sustainability by Maureen Ellis (ed.)

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ABSTRACT

Review of Maureen Ellis (ed.), *Spiritual Consciousness as Evolutionary Learning: Exploring Myth, Metaphor, Magic for Sustainability*, Routledge, London and New York 2025, p. 302.

The book *Spiritual Consciousness as Evolutionary Learning: Myth, Metaphor and Magic for Sustainability*, edited by Maureen Ellis (2025), examines how spiritual myths, metaphors, and practices from diverse traditions can serve as tools for cultural transformation, sustainability, and conflict resolution. It deploys a multidisciplinary framework—including semiotics, anthropology, linguistics, mysticism, neuroscience, psychology, quantum theory, and phenomenology—to explore how ancient and modern metaphors shape global identity, environmental stewardship, human rights, military power, and mental health. This book is timely and very much needed in light of today's global challenges.

Indeed, currently, an end-of-times atmosphere seems to weigh on the entire world. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, humanity finds itself at a crossroads, beset by existential threats that challenge our very survival. It is not the first time in history that a deep concern about the future has spread. Apocalyptic visions were recurrent in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. The novelty is that, after the appearance of terrifying weapons of mass destruction in the 20th century and their constant improvement and diffusion in our century, there is now the awareness that if humanity were to meet its end

it would in all likelihood be due to its own mistakes rather than divine intervention. The doom of humanity, precisely because it would be caused by human foolishness, would therefore be even more inglorious. The list of existential threats we are now facing is long and daunting. Technological dangers include misaligned artificial general intelligence, engineered pandemics, uncontrolled nanotechnology, nuclear war, and failed geoengineering efforts. Environmental risks stem from climate change, biodiversity loss, and the potential collapse of global agriculture. On the societal level, the rise of global totalitarianism or systemic economic collapse could irreversibly degrade human well-being. Of course, some dangers arise independently of human actions. Natural catastrophes, though rare, also pose serious dangers—such as asteroid impacts, supervolcanic eruptions, and cosmic events like gamma-ray bursts. In these situations religions can play an important role.

Most major religions, at least in principle, advocate for peace, compassion, and kindness toward others. Yet history shows that religious differences have often led to violence. Today, many of the numerous ongoing wars and conflicts around the world still involve a significant religious component. The Syrian Civil War, while primarily a political conflict, involves Sunni Muslim groups opposed to the Alawite-led government, along with extremist groups such as ISIS. The Yemeni Civil War includes a sectarian component, with the Houthi rebels being primarily Zaidi Shia Muslims and the Yemeni government forces largely Sunni Muslims. In the Afghan Conflict, religion plays a crucial role, with the Taliban advocating an Islamic Emirate based on their interpretation of Sharia law, which is opposed by various groups seeking a more secular or different Islamic governance. In the Somalian Civil War, the Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab seeks to establish a fundamentalist Islamic state in Somalia and is a key player in the ongoing conflict. Sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia Muslim groups, as well as the presence of extremist groups like ISIS, plays a significant role in the ongoing instability of Iraq since the time of the American invasion of the country. The Cameroon Crisis, while primarily a political and linguistic conflict, shows underlying religious tensions as well, with the predominantly Christian Anglophone regions opposing the central government of a largely Muslim Francophone leadership. Although mainly ethnic and political, the Kurdish-Turkish Conflict also has religious elements, with tensions between predominantly Sunni Muslim Kurds and the Turkish state. Finally, the Central African Republic (CAR) Conflict involves significant religious violence between Muslim Seleka rebels and predominantly Christian anti-Balaka militias. These conflicts show how religious divisions often become entangled with political, ethnic, and social tensions, intensifying violence and making peaceful resolution more difficult. Unfortunately, Western democracies—frequently influenced by powerful arms and

oil lobbies—sometimes exploit or even fuel these ethno-religious wars rather than working to bring about peace.

Most of these conflicts go on unnoticed by the general public because mainstream media focuses on the conflict that has shaken the Holy Land for more than seventy years and on the war that has broken out in Ukraine since the Maidan uprising in 2014. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict has an obvious ethnic and religious dimension, involving Jewish Israelis and predominantly Muslim Palestinians. The terrorist attack committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023 killed hundreds of Israeli civilians and Israel's harsh response in the Gaza Strip has resulted in the deaths of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including many children. One consequence of this sequence of events is that, on 20 May 2024, the International Criminal Court prosecutor alleged that crimes against humanity have been committed by both sides and he is now seeking arrest warrants for Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, which has turned into a de facto conflict between Russia and NATO, has predominantly ethnic, economic and geopolitical causes. Nevertheless, it also contains some religious elements. As *The Guardian* reported on 20 October 2023, 'The Ukrainian parliament gave initial approval on Thursday to a law that would ban the Moscow-linked Ukrainian Orthodox Church.' In the wake of this initiative, at least two high-profile clerics, Metropolitans Pavlo and Ionafan, have been arrested by the Ukrainian authorities. On the Russian side, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow blessed the 2022 invasion of Eastern Ukraine by Vladimir Putin's army.

All this is happening as new, highly destructive weapons such as hypersonic missiles, drones, combat robots and weaponised artificial intelligence appear on the battlefield, and threats to use tactical and strategic nuclear weapons have been made.

According to Maureen Ellis, in the face of these multifaceted challenges, it is crucial to explore the underlying threads that connect us as a global community. One such thread is the shared symbolic language of our religions and myths. Despite being wielded to justify and foment conflicts, the world's religions are like a family, sharing many ideas, metaphors and allegories to articulate the divine.

The book compiles twenty chapters by a range of contributors, each exploring various religious traditions, myths, and worldviews through a semiotic lens. Its aim is to uncover the deep connections between different religious traditions, highlighting the shared symbols, metaphors, narratives, and allegories that transcend cultural and geographical boundaries. Through this exploration, the authors demonstrate that, at their core, the religions of the world speak a common language, one that can foster understanding and unity rather than division and strife. Nonetheless, the authors also highlight the profound

doctrinal problems that historical religions carry with them, and they offer solutions to help defuse conflict-generating ideas.

Concerning methods, it is the conviction of the authors that a semiotic approach is vital to achieve their aim. Their focus is mainly on metaphors and metonymy. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 179, 196), they take metaphor as a way of understanding one concept by relating it to another. Its main purpose is to enhance comprehension. In contrast, metonymy serves a primarily referential role—it lets us refer to one thing by mentioning something closely associated with it. In essence, both metaphor and metonymy support a dynamic, expressive use of language, enabling us to 'see and say' through flexible associations such as synonyms, antonyms, demonyms, endonyms, exonyms, homonyms, and holonyms—helping us recognize both similarities and distinctions.

Having clarified the raison d'être of the book and its methodological approach, let us now focus on the substantive aspects of each single chapter the reader will find in this book.

In chapter 1, Ralph H. Abraham explains that in mythology and religions, Chaos was a god or goddess and a prevalent cultural concept during prehistory and early historical periods. For example, Tiamat was the goddess of chaos in ancient Babylon and she was subjugated by Marduk who brought order to the universe. Circa 1600 CE, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton brought order to the sciences, taming chaos in the process. This kind of science held sway until the Chaos Revolution in mathematics in the 1960s. The foundation of Nature and the sciences was once again chaos. Once more, natural chaos was outside the purview of physicalist science. By taking an autobiographical perspective, the author traces his 60-year evolution against a background of discontinuous change in the ambient culture.

In chapter 2, Peter Brown focuses on emerging cognitive neuroscience showing that it provides a set of tools for understanding the communication modes of myth, ritual, the stories we tell to and about ourselves, and the enactment or embodied exploration of those stories. He explains that the resonance that underpins the embodied level of shared physical engagement, the preconscious level of neural networks, the emotional level of personal meaning, and the cultural level of shared values, can all be regarded as being closely tied to both musical experience and shared values. Myth, ritual, and music are linked to healing and transformational processes through the investigation of experience. There are many similarities between music therapy, mindfulness meditation, and the rapidly expanding use of psychedelic drugs, as evidenced by the dramatic growth of clinical research in these three modalities that modulate personal experience.

In chapter 3, Maureen Ellis creates a fascinating bridge between the biblical concept of 'Imago Dei' and the Vedanta concept 'Brahman is Atman',

blending Kantian faith in moral imagination, karmic causality, and chiastic energy across prehistoric chasms, indicating a long line of Orphism. She connects the Gospel of John's 'Word made flesh that dwells amongst us' (John 1:14–18) with emergent, transcendent consciousness, Teilhard de Chardin's cosmo-noo-genesis integrating science and spirituality, Hegel's Absolute Spirit, and Peirce's Agapeistic Evolution. Grounding ecology as functional cosmology, Ellis proposes that Conceptual Metaphor Theory binds salient consciousness in 'passionate consilience'. Critical conscience and whispering moral imagination satisfies *Sat-chit-anand* (being-consciousness-bliss). God is to be found not in the wind, earthquake or fire, but in the still small voice of conscience. Divinity must descend, somehow, into our own existence and life processes.

In chapter 4, Guo-Ming Chen and G. Richard Holt analyse how Lao Zi uses the water metaphor in the *Dao De Jin*g to transform the meanings of *Dao* from the metaphysical level to social and behavioural levels. The authors show that, by means of the water metaphor, *Dao* is reduced to three ideas: yong rou (softness/weakness), chu xia (subordination)/bu zheng (non-competition), and Zhi xu (attainment of perfect vacuity). According to the rhetorical approach, Lao Zi's use of the metaphor of water not only helps people grasp the true nature of society and persuades them to embrace a new way of thinking, but it also frames a unifying image of *Dao* by establishing a shared meaning in the public consciousness. In this way, Lao Zi effectively illustrates through his skill as a persuasive rhetor that the metaphor is a potent language instrument for conveying and developing the intended meaning of a philosophical concept.

In chapter 5, Judson Davis focuses on the 'holographic paradigm', a still-emerging set of theoretical propositions that has its foundation in quantum physics and which has implications for religious and spiritual life. According to this theory, matter and human consciousness are perceived as belonging to the same essential substance, and the cosmos is seen as a vast hologram with which the human brain reflexively interacts. In brief, mental and physical attributes have a common formless primal genesis, and despite their apparent separation in manifest form, they are part of one indivisible, intricately-woven pattern of energy. The goal of Davis's chapter is to provide an elaboration and synthesis of these findings in light of the latest advances in quantum physics, foundational work in the fields of depth and transpersonal psychology by Carl Jung, Stanislav Grof, and Christopher Bache, and core ideas of ancient Eastern religious traditions, particularly Zen Buddhism and Shinto. It also looks at the emergence of a new God-image in the continuing evolution of human consciousness, where a new paradigm articulating the inherent sacredness of all things on Earth and the union of psyche and matter is based on the Sacred Feminine, as represented by the Great Goddess.

In chapter 6, Anne K. Kurjenoja and Janina C. Carrera model the conceptual blending between traditional Mayan nature-culture knowledge and modern medical science, speculating about hybridising them to create a 're-invented' magic of healing and wellbeing. They also explore the development of social myths, magical rites, and conceptual ontological metaphors as fundamentals for the Mayan concept of caregiving and curing. Indeed, the central idea of Maya cosmology, which dates back to pre-Columbian periods, is the harmonious coexistence of all living and non-living things in the universe. A healthy body and spirit have always been promoted by a harmonious biocultural relationship, and Maya medical and spiritual wisdom is still used to treat new health problems arising in the Yucatan Lowlands' indigenous communities. Though it is ultimately about the mix of physical (i.e., plants) and spiritual (i.e., ritual) aspects of curing, modern pharmaceutical laboratories have examined Mayan pharmacopeia in order to identify components able to initiate the curative process.

In chapter 7, Riccardo Campa and Jamsheed K. Choksy argue that Zoroastrianism serves as a prime example of how, by seeking to rationalise and explain the human condition, ancient myths about opposing cosmic entities produced metaphors of spiritual and corporeal struggles which have both united and divided humans for over 3,000 years along sectarian, political, and ethnic lines. Tracing the origins of dualist metaphor, the authors analyse scripture in the form of religious poetry attributed to the Prophet Zarathushtra and exegetical prose compiled by the magi or Zoroastrian clergymen. These religious texts describe an initial meeting, before the beginning of time, between twin spirits—one destined to be venerated as God and the other feared as the Devil. Each entity supposedly chose between two irreconcilable paths: creation and destruction, life and death, righteousness and unrighteousness, clarity and confusion. As Zoroastrianism influenced the three great Abrahamic monotheisms, these concepts reached the largest part of humanity and also developed into ideologies which had sectarian and political ramifications. The idea that each side appropriates and claims to represent a just cause has become ingrained as nations, governments, and groups have clashed. The dualistic worldview sown by Zarathushtra and the magi remains ubiquitous, deeply ingrained, and extremely divisive. It manifests itself in conflicts between religious communities, from Crusaders to Jihadists, and between superpowers such as the US and the Russian Federation. However, Zoroastrianism also offers ways to reconcile these differences, and the authors discuss approaches to resolving the dualistic dispute.

In chapter 8, Kishor Dere begins with an explanation of Cultural Historical Action Theory (CHAT) and then he attempts to dispel the myth that, in an era dominated by scientific and technical breakthroughs, the traditional Indian dance form of Bharatanatyam is no longer relevant. His study looks at how

myth, metaphor, and magic are used to highlight how Bharatanatyam is still relevant in today's world, especially when it comes to resolving conflicts. He makes use of metaphors from philosophy, physics, and religion to explain the dance form's enduring appeal. Despite scepticism from some quarters, a rising number of aficionados are drawn to Bharatanatyam because it provides a meaningful and spiritually rewarding experience that speaks to humanity's collective conscience.

In chapter 9, Subhash Jain explains that, in Jainism, the goal of life is to eliminate one's 'karmic debt' in order to attain nirvana. This is accomplished by carrying out virtuous deeds, or *puṇya* acts. Deploying desirable 'means of actions' (the many aspects and conditions necessary for accomplishing an action) might help minimise one's karmic debt. His chapter provides examples of Jain-specific forms of action as well as an explanation of *puṇya* activities that are consistent with the self-regulating metaphysical model of the karma concept. The karmic process is governed or 'administered' by the karmic body (*kārmaṇ śarīra*) in Jainism, a non-theistic religion. Depending on the degree of illusion (*moha*) connected to a person's acts, the karmic body accrues karmic particles (the karmic debt). A *puṇya* deed is an action that reduces the karmic debt. The central assumption is the following: if we think that living a non-violent, non-possessive lifestyle would lead to spiritual development and an inner peace-filled life, then we are more likely to follow this path. To the extent that we believe in leading non-violent lives, we have the power to solve contemporary environmental problems.

In chapter 10, Thomas Tai-Seale argues that, if metaphors govern our lives, we need stronger metaphors—especially religious ones. He proposes three new metaphors for our age: God is one, humanity is one, and essential religion is one. If there is one God and one humanity, and if God establishes a compassionate connection between them, religion itself should be one. Religion should be the story of human understanding of this one truth, but the process is made difficult by the plurality of words and concepts to describe similar things, and because people have different needs at different points in time and space. It requires effort to uncover the one truth, the essential religion, beneath culturally-derived variants. Tai-Seale explores whether Buddhism shares an essential unity with other religions, the changes that are required of us upon realising the oneness of religion, and how Buddhism can aid in this process.

In chapter 11, Joshua Sabih examines how theology, scriptural interpretation, violence, and war intersect. The current conflict between Israel and Hamas—the fifth since 2006—stands out because both Hamas's religious nationalism and the revisionist religious Zionism of some Israeli groups regard the war as either a necessary or presumed confirmation of the biblical promise to Abraham. This entails the translation of the Abrahamic covenant into a repre-

sentation of violence. Sabih examines scriptural passages cited by Hamas spokesperson Abu Ubaydah and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in order to illuminate their respective theological rationalisations of violence. He employs textual and linguistic analysis of passages from the Quran and the Bible to help the reader understand the ways in which violence is portrayed and justified in political discourse.

In chapter 12, Matthew Fox points to the matricide of Mother Earth, racism and the folly of human war as profound evils, reasoning that, since the opposite of evil is the Sacred, it would seem our times are calling for a return of the mystics and a democratising of mysticism to counterbalance the extinction of our own and millions of other species that stares us in the face. He laments the 'mystical illiteracy' of the West and declares that Western religion has pretty much ignored its own mystical tradition, claiming that any Christian who is ignorant of the mystical lineage of the West has a 'bad relationship' with his or her own faith tradition. Fox claims that the majority of seminaries and theological schools long ago sold their souls to accrediting agencies and 'left-brained academic philosophies' that have no idea how to instruct or understand mystics. He argues that Christianity needs to 're-discover' its non-dualist tradition and the apophatic Divinity to find its 'valuable jewels'. The result is a Creation Spirituality which not only brings the apophatic and non-dualist mystical tradition of the West alive, it also listens to science and puts the sacredness of creation first. It underscores interconnectivity and interbeing which form the substrate for compassion. It leads therefore to a greening of our consciousness and a call to action on behalf of Mother Earth and future generations of beings, human and more-than-human.

In chapter 13, Riccardo Campa emphasises that intraspecific warfare is a persistent feature of human existence. Religions have always had a conflicted relationship with this reality, either encouraging or appeasing man's innate desire for violence. Christianity is likewise characterised by this ambivalence. Without question, there has been a beneficial evolution in Catholic Church teaching and practice about warfare. Over the course of the past century, popes and Catholic organisations have firmly and unmistakably committed themselves to the cause of peace. However, there are still theological matters that have not received the attention they deserve. The Bible contains calls for murder, slaughter, and looting. Taking note of names, metaphors, and symbols that denote divinity, this chapter seeks to dissect translations and interpretations that portray God as an uncompromising combatant. Campa casts doubt on the idea that the various titles for God found in the Bible all pertain to the same being. He contends that re-evaluating the biblical character of Elyon, the history of negative theology, and the notion of God's ineffability, is the best way to stop Abrahamic religions from being used as justifications for wars and acts of violence.

In chapter 14, Jaskiran Kaur Bhogal proposes that Christian and post-Christian legacies in anthropology create default categories such as 'spirituality and politics', but this framing of spirituality and politics as mutually exclusive is not present in Sikhī (the vernacular for the Sikh faith); they are more fluid, interdependent, and intertwined. This chapter aims to explore how Sikhs comprehend the relationship between the spiritual and the political through the lens of *mīrī pīrī* (the vernacular understanding of the relationship between spirituality and politics) through homemaking and the institution of the *Gurdwārā* (the Sikh place of 'worship'). An anthropology of Sikhī could contribute to this conversation highlighting an alternative view of the interplay of people's worlds. The praxis of *mīrī pīrī* demonstrates the interrelation between spirituality and politics not only theoretically, but also practically, enabling us to identify how spirituality and religious concepts are meaningful in peoples' lives. Building from an emic approach to support a theoretical understanding of *mīrī pīrī*, the author begins to construct a more cooperative understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and political to work towards developing a theoretical framework to understand society more broadly. Considering these concepts will help to widen the lens through which anthropologists understand minority and marginalised communities to take seriously wider emic praxis of other cultures.

In chapter 15, Deborah Clark Vance states that, for Bahá'ís, religion is logical, practical and progressive and that it has, over time, moved humanity closer to a unified world. Bahá'í teaches that human reality is our thought, not our bodies, and that life is for acquiring spiritual attributes, not reaching material goals. The author outlines how grassroots communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea studied and discussed Bahá'í teachings, leading Bahá'ís in those countries to build temples to honour and solidify community. Connecting this tangible outcome with a long preceding process of inquiry and negotiations, Vance examines Bahá'í symbolism, in particular metaphors of light in both temples, mapping the ways in which metaphors influence thought patterns. The symbolic language of Bahá'í offers image schema set in the present, as well as conceptual metaphors grounded in light that depict ever shining rays of spirit—even if the mirrors of human hearts are too dusty to reflect them.

In chapter 16, Rhiannon Grant explains that, in the 20th century, a movement known as 'universalism' arose among Liberal Quakers in Britain and North America. Unlike other Christian groups known as 'universalist', Liberal Quakers were speaking not about salvation but about direct access to the Divine and hence to religious truth. A central claim of the Quaker universalist position is that truth can be found in all religious traditions. Apparent differences, when they are noticed, are attributed to language or culture, and the assumption that all people inwardly experience the same Divine, 'that of God

in every one', is maintained. Rarely challenged from within the Quaker community, this theological claim raises a number of questions about the relationship of Quakers to other faith traditions, which in this framework they both see as equal and claim to understand better than their adherents. Quaker universalism is also related to other theological justifications for the equality of all people before God. Together, these theological ideas have been used in the 20th and 21st centuries to underpin a range of movements towards social justice, such as peacebuilding projects, campaigning for equal marriage, and addressing racial inequality in the context of the climate crisis. The author explores three ways in which these claims and connections are made visible: through Quaker materials for visitors and enquirers, through Quaker press releases and other explanations of campaigning positions, and through the Quaker commitment to the connection between faith and action.

In chapter 17, Genevieve Vaughan proposes that unilateral maternal giving-and-receiving constitutes the economy of early childhood, establishing a basic alter-centric model of the human for the child. *Quid pro quo* exchange, which is learned later, follows an egocentric logic that contradicts gifting and structures a Capitalist economy that feeds parasitically upon the gifts of humans, other creatures, and the Earth. Recognising this, we can change the definition of the human, identify a gift economy as an alternative base beneath Marx's base and superstructure metaphor, and find a way to shift into an integrated magical consciousness that re-establishes our spiritual gift-based connection with Nature.

In chapter 18, Stephen Brock Schafer contends that the ancient axiom that humans create 'reality' with their thoughts, feelings, and even movements is best exemplified with the medium of video games. Humans are now using algorithms to 'control' everything from brewing coffee to self-driving cars to global surveillance systems. Algorithms have either symmetrical or asymmetrical trajectories that are 'entangled' at quantum levels and which, therefore, create the tension required for evolution and 'learning'. The primary difference in trajectories is that symmetrical mathematics (algorithms) is applied to closed systems, whereas asymmetrical mathematics is applied to open 'infinite' systems. The latter approach is consistent with the current science of quantum field theory (QFT) which represents an ontological paradigm shift. A source code that emphasises the asymmetrical trend toward evolutionary 'learning' can be applied to reinforce gamer-learning about the 'True Self' within an infinite open-source kaleidoscopic electromagnetic cosmos. The same source code can be used to insinuate the evolutionary trend into society's media-field. Educating students to realize their True Selves with the medium of game-play will lead inevitably to the reality of a culture of conscience. Incorporating the structure and dynamics of Jungian dreams, Psychecology video games (PEGs) offer purposeful, electromagnetic jour-

neys, frequency-locking with human agency. Ancient Perennial Wisdoms, contemplated cosmic reality, studied in the world's Mystery Schools can now be understood as hard science and as Evolutionary Learning Theory consistent with QFT ontology.

In chapter 19, David Warden shares his personal shift from evangelical Christianity to humanism, tracing a path from childhood belief, through theological doubt, to a more reflective, human-centered outlook in adulthood. He describes this transition as a release from limiting religious images and metaphors that once blocked his personal growth. Though he now identifies as an atheist, his view is influenced by Feuerbach—he rejects religious fanaticism but embraces values like love, wisdom, and justice.

In chapter 20, using the findings of ecoacoustics and biosemiotics as well as the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, W. John Coletta argues that metaphor (in the Bible, in culture, and in nature) and *qualia* (sensory responses and feelings that serve as advanced, not simple, modelling systems) are powerful algorithms (not mere ornaments) for the ongoing project of growing the Word-in-Conversation (the Divine Logos, a Logos that is not logocentric). The author calls this project 're-imaging and re-sciencing the Bible'. This project also serves to restore the force of the Bible's underlying *indigeneity* by showing how the Bible celebrates the sentience and experience of all participants in Creation as well as the centrality of *place* in our understanding of the Word-in-Conversation, important acts of consilience that restore what is called a 'Christian animism'. The Word-in-Conversation, the Divine Logos is understood as a Wor(l)d-making algorithm. The power of metaphor, of the Word, of the Word-in-Conversation, is ongoing and requires that we align ourselves with the whole of Creation in aligning ourselves with the Holy Spirit in a process that Peirce calls 'evolutionary love'.

In conclusion, as Maureen Ellis underlines in the introduction to the book, *Spiritual Consciousness as Evolutionary Learning: Myth, Metaphor and Magic for Sustainability* is a valuable resource for researchers, scholars, and postgraduate students, as well as for policymakers, educators, and members of civil society working in areas such as cultural anthropology, semiotics, critical realism, neuroscience, and religious studies. As we as readers embark on this journey through the rich tapestry of global religious traditions, let us remember that the insights we gain can illuminate paths toward greater empathy and cooperation. By recognising the shared symbolic heritage of our faiths, we can begin to see beyond the surface-level differences and appreciate the profound commonalities that bind us together. In particular, it is essential to rediscover the bridge that unites East and West. The message of the book is that it is within our power to address the existential threats we face today with a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect, forging a path toward a more resilient and harmonious future.

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