

# [Theology essays – rainbow of faiths](https://assignbuster.com/theology-essays-rainbow-of-faiths/)

## Evaluate John Hick ‘ s defense mechanism of his place in his book, TheRainbow of Faiths

This paper will measure John Hick ‘ s defense mechanism of his positionin his book The Rainbow of Faiths ( Hick, J. 1995 ) . Get downing with abrief historical and theological background to the argument the paper will thenreview Hick ‘ s book and buttocks whether or non Hicks is successful in his defenceof his version of spiritual pluralism which holds that:

.. thegreat universe faiths constitute really different but so far as we can state moreor less every bit valid ways of conceiving, sing, and reacting in lifeto the ultimate world with which faith is concerned ( Hick, 1995: 149 ) .

Background

The argument about the nature and being of God, andmost specifically for Christianity, of the individual Christ arose out of the 18 Thursday century arguments over ground and faith. Natural divinity and its argumentsfor the being of God had tended to disregard Christ. With Kant and laterSchleiermacher, linguistic communication about God became closely related to linguistic communication aboutChrist-even though there was the inclination to do Jesus a mere illustration of themoral and spiritual life. With Barth nevertheless, Christ is put at the Centre oftheology. In Barth ‘ s divinity it is merely in the Embodiment that we haveknowledge of God in his transcendency. Subsequent late nineteenth and earlytwentieth developments, peculiarly the outgrowth of the comparative survey ofreligion, demonstrated a cardinal job between Barth ‘ s vision of Christ, and the viing claims of other spiritual traditions. Barth referred todialogue between Christianity and other faiths as kindred to ululating withwolves ( King, 1995 ) . In malice of Barth ‘ s ailment bookmans ‘ lifting involvement inthe nature of other faiths led to the first Parliament of World Religions inChicago in 1893. The Parliament has since been described as an attempt inChristian Universalism there were nevertheless, interesting developments from this, non least the acknowledgment that there was a demand for duologue between theexponents of Christianity and those of other religions. Finally this developedinto what is now called inter-faith duologue, and into divinities of worldreligions. Both D’Costa ( 1986 ) and Race ( 1985 ) maintain that there are threebasic places in spiritual duologue, and in universe faiths ‘ theologies. These typologies were originally developed in the work of Race ( 1983 ) anddefended against critics by De Costa ( 1986 ) these are, exclusivist, inclusivistand pluralist.

* Eclusivism: In this place there is merely one true faith, all other faiths are false or misguided.
* Inclusivism: This is the position which holds that while all faiths may hold a portion of the truth merely the supreme faith ( Christianity ) has the whole truth.
* Pluralism: maintains that all and any of the faiths have partial versions of the truth and the one Universal Spirit.

What has to be noted here is that all three of thesepositions are Christian positions of duologue with other faiths, and one wonderswhat positions they might keep on this, peculiarly when other faiths have nosay in the preparation of such theologies.. As Clooney ( 1989 ) inquiries,

Can other faiths have a function in the development ofa Christian divinity of faiths and the duologue of faiths? ( Clooney, 1989: 201 ) .

Hick and the Rainbow of Faiths

John Hick saw that it would be really hard topreserve a Christ centered religion when it came to the brush with other worldreligions. Therefore in his earlier work he maintained that what was needed was aCopernican revolution in Christianity whereby it ceased to be Christ centeredand God was restored to the Centre. This common Centre, he argued, would formthe footing of a divinity of universe faiths ( Hick, 1977 ) . Hick forewords TheRainbow of Faiths with mention to ( at the clip of composing 1995 ) thedeepening theological crisis of Christianity at the terminal of the twentiethcentury. This crisis is apparent in the rational job that the existenceof diverse faiths nowadayss and that, Hick maintains, is apparent as both atheological and a philosophical job. His major concern is with one aspectof the crisis and that is the response of the assorted spiritual traditions tothe Divine, the Ultimate, or what Hick calls the Real.

The book was developed from the writer ‘ s AuburnLectures given at Union Theological Seminary in April 1994. Hick frames thedefence of his place as a duologue with two spouses they are a philosopher, whom he calls Phil, and a theologian called Grace. The parts of Hick ‘ s dialoguepartners Phil and Grace were adopted by two PhD pupils during the Auburnlectures.

Hick uses the rainbow in the rubric as ametaphor for the manner in which the Godhead visible radiation of God is reflected in the raysof the universe ‘ s faith traditions. His very pick of rubric and his explanationof it in the foreword is, arguably, representative of his pluralist place. Inreferring to his pick of a duologue for bordering the rational job thathe maintains is apparent in divinity and doctrine Hick provinces:

The purpose of theological and philosophical duologue is non necessarilyto come to an agreement-though this of class is much to be desired, andsometimes happens-but to turn up the differences more exactly, and to see whatthe pros and cons of a inquiry are ( Hick: 1995: 2 ) .

Hick argues that although the inquiry ofpluralism is a controversial 1 for the churches, who, he maintains, veer fromconservative orthodoxy to broad relativism, his purpose however is toconvince his duologue spouses and his readers that a plural attack ispermissible within a Christian model and that it is pulling the interestto an increasing figure of people, both Christian and non-Christian. On theappropriateness of a divinity of universe faiths Hick contends that:

divinity is a turning and developing being, so that anappropriate theological model for today and tomorrow may good differ fromwhat was appropriate a thousand old ages ago or so, as the gait of culturalchange has increased, a hundred old ages ago, or even a coevals ago ( Hick: 1995: 12 ) .

Hick discusses what he sees as thefallacy of Christian moral domination, which sees Christianity as the onlyreligion that was founded by God and that those who espouse Christianity have acloser relationship with God than do others, because the fruits of being aChristian are said to be apparent in a Christian ‘ s life. Hick inquiries whetherthis can be supported and established through empirical observation or whether it is an a prioriclaim, or a affair of first and preexistent rule. He speaks of themulti-faith nature of modern-day society and how Britain in peculiar hasseen a alteration to its spiritual landscape since the Second World War and themigration of many former commonwealth citizens. He goes on to state that theappearance of Numberss of different topographic points of worship, and the fact that thenewcomers are our neighbors has engendered the realisation that people fromother religions are non so different from ourselves. He cites St. Paul ‘ s list ofthe fruits of the spirit as every bit apparent in the lives of those outside thetradition as they are within it. ! n scriptural divinity, Christians are supposedto be recognizable by the fact that their lives grounds the fruits of thespirit, because these fruits, Hick contends, are besides apparent in the lives ofnon-Christians. How is it possible, he asks, to show that the fruits ofChristian life are superior to the fruits of any other life. In position of this heargues that:

The bearing of this upon a Christian divinity of faiths is thatthe deficiency of discernible moral high quality is at discrepancy with our traditionaltheology I am led to reason that this divinity is in demand of alteration. Forsurely its map is to do sense of the facts, non to be a device forsystematically disregarding or beliing them ( Hick, 1995: 15-16 ) .

After looking at the job from thepoint of position of Christian moral domination Hick so goes on to look at thingsfrom the point of position of soteriology ( salvation history ) . It is cardinal toChristian divinity that God ‘ s forgiveness and credence of humanity iscontingent on the Atonement, the decease of Jesus on the cross and his subsequentresurrection. If this is the instance, so Hick argues:

it is a tautology that Christianity entirely knows and Teachs thesaving truth that we must take Jesus as our Lord and Jesus, plead his atoningdeath, and enter into the church as the community of the redeemed, in which thefruits of the Spirit abound ( Hick, 1995: 16 ) .

This of class, Hick contends, iscontradictory because he has already demonstrated that the fruits of the spiritare nowadays in faith traditions other than Christianity, and besides innon-religious people. Although here it may be argued that he has non so muchdemonstrated the fact that these fruits can be seen in the lives of people ofother religions ( because he names non one specific incidence ) as asserted it, thatis non to state that the position of Christian moral domination that Hick criticizesis any the less an averment if one does non subscribe to it. Hick maintainsthat it is the fruits that are of import and uses Bible to endorse up hisclaim that Jesus was more interested in how work forces and adult females lived their livesthan in theological propositions. He so goes on to contend that we look atsalvation as a alteration in human beings-a alteration which can be identified-whenit can be identified-by its moral fruits ( 1995: 17 ) . This he sees as centralto all the universe ‘ s religions, the transmutation of human life, a motion fromself-centredness to a foundation in God, or what Hick chooses to name, theReal ( 1995: 18 ) . Whether this foundation could, or should be applied toBuddhism would depend on which Buddhist way one was mentioning to.

Disciples of all faiths, Hickmaintains, have their lives transformed by this turning towards the existent. Heasserts that all the universe faiths are non truly doctrines or theologiesbut ways of redemption and release. While Hick may be right in what he says, this is surely an premise that might be criticized by some people in theJudao-Christian and Muslim religions, who might see their faith as orientedtowards lauding God instead than salvation/liberation. What Hick calls thehybrid term salvation/liberation, is, he states the cardinal concern of allreligious traditions. Hick so goes on to talk of typologies of worldreligion divinities, he refers to the sole, inclusive and pluralistpositions mentioned earlier. In relation to exclusivity where redemption isconfined to Christians. De Costa ( 1986 ) who besides rejects exclusivism, says ofit that its cardinal claim is:

that other faiths are marked by world ‘ s fundamentalsinfulness and are hence erroneous, and that Christ ( or Christianity ) offers the lone valid way ( De Costa, 1986: 52 ) .

In his ain rebuttal of exclusivism, Hickrefers specifically to the Roman Catholic Church which used to keep that therewas no redemption outside of the church of Rome, a place that was rejected atthe Second Vatican Council. The position that redemption is confined to Christiansis still nevertheless the position of a big figure of fundamentalist Protestants. Hicksays of this:

if we mean by redemption, existent salvific alteration in adult females andmen, so it is, as I have been reminding us, an discernible fact that this hasnot been restricted either to any subdivision of Christianity or to Christianity asa whole. Given this really concrete construct of salvation/liberation thenChristian exclusivism is non a unrecorded option ( Hicks, 1995: 19-20 ) .

Presents, the Catholic church, and themajority of Protestants would ( so Hick maintains ) hold to an inclusivistviewpoint. This nevertheless, can take a assortment of signifiers, the inclusivism oftheologians such as De Costa ( 1986 ) and Race ( 1985 ) is one that:

on the one hand.. accepts the religious power and deepness manifest ( in other religions ) .. on the other manus it rejects them as non being sufficientfor redemption apart from Christ, for Christ entirely is saviour ( Race, 1985: 38 ) .

As Hick notes, there are a figure ofdifferent fluctuations on the inclusivist place and De Costa take the position ofthe Roman Catholic theologist, Karl Rahner. Peoples of other religions can beincluded in Christian redemption under Rahner ‘ s construct of ‘ anonymous Christian. ‘ Hick besides refers to thesalvation/liberation theoretical account of inclusivism as found in Panniker ‘ s ( 1981 ) work ( the statement is that the transmutation evident in the lives of people ofother faiths agencies that they follow Christ but may non recognize it ) Hick argues that this is nottruly a Christian inclusivism, instead, he maintains, this version is closer tohis ain impression of pluralism.

However Kung ( 1991 ) argues againstinclusivist divinities of universe faiths, therefore he contends that:

what looks similar acceptance in pattern proves to be a sort ofconquest through embracing, a affair of leting cogency through domestication, an integrating through a loss of individuality ( Kung, 1991: 81 ) .

One wonders whether Hick might besides beaccused of this since while he dismisses it as a Christian inclusivism andargues that it is closer to his ain version of pluralism, could he non besides becriticized for minimising the individualities of the universe ‘ s spiritual traditions? This, it might be argued, is a absolutely valid inquiry, peculiarly as Hick thengoes on to mention to the widely differing truth claims and constructs of God ofthe assorted faith traditions in footings of maps of the universe,

. if one type of map is accurate the others must be inaccurate. If they are decently made, they are all accurate-and yet in another sense theyare all inaccurate, in that they all necessarily distort ( Hick, 1995: 27 ) .

I would arguethat this is an unfortunate analogy as it appears as though, if we took toomuch note of what Hick is stating here so we might be merely every bit likely to wonderwhether any faith has any usage at all! Certainly De Costa ( 1986 ) whenreferring to Hicks earlier work, maintains that Hick ‘ s effort to free thereligions of sole truth claims may good intend that there is nil left ofreligion.

Hick ‘ s place is that all of the worldreligions are grounded in the same world: :

the Ultimate indefinable Reality is capable of being authenticallyexperienced in footings of different sets of human constructs, as Jaweh, as the HolyTrinity, as Allah. occurring at the interface between the Real and ourdiffering spiritual outlooks and civilizations ( Hick, 1995: 23 ) .

Hick uses Kant ‘ s differentiation between thenoumena ( what something is in itself ) and the phenomena ( our perceptual experience of it ) therefore, while Hick would hold us believe in transmutation by the existent, the existent, at least in the footings Hick presents it, is non truly accessible to humanbeings. That is to state ( as Hick does ) that what is indefinable is beyond humanconceptualization. Which takes us back to Anselm and the ontological statement that God is that ofwhich nil greater can be conceived. Therefore neither persons nor thereligions themselves can claim to hold cognition of what the Real number is. Hick hasargued in The Philosophy of Religion ( 1990 ) that:

the different faiths are different watercourses of religiousexperience, each holding started at a different point within human history andeach holding formed its ain conceptual uneasiness within a differentcultural surroundings ( Hick 1990: 114 ) .

Hick relies on Phillips ( 1965 ) impression ofexpressivism in that what spiritual trusters experience of the Real that cannotbe known or conceptualized by human existences. is expressed in their lives. Hickmaintains that while Phillips is a non-realist ( the denial of an objectiveultimate world ) he himself claims to be a realist but it could be argued thathe undermines this claim by following an expressivist attack. This I wouldargue points to a contradiction in Hick ‘ s work. This internal contradictionconcerning his claim to follow a realist place is besides apparent in his earlierwork The Myth of God Incarnate ( 1977 ) where he criticises the earlycommunity and the subsequently early church for taking the statements sing Jesus’divinity as nonsubjective truth. While it has to be acknowledged that this islogically debatable, as Wittgenstein ‘ s work has shown most spiritual languageis of that nature, and so can merely be understood in the context in which it isused. It has to be said that the most obvious failing of Hick ‘ s place isthat it is internally contradictory.

Decision

What motivates a pluralist divinity ofreligions is what Hick defines as a deep regard for the human household ( 1995: 118 ) . Numerous observers, nevertheless, have questioned the position of acommon human history, acknowledging that such a position stems from the political orientation ofthe Enlightenment and the mentality that accompanied colonial imperialism. Feminist observers in peculiar have highlighted how the discourses of theEnlightenment, that claimed to talk for all, really oppressed at least halfthe human race by presuming a common historical experience. Such discoursesfeminists contend violate the most basic right, that of the human individual to be’other ‘ than the norm. It is this premise of commonalty that I would argueposes a serious menace to Hick ‘ s place. Hick dismisses the thought thatdifferences of sentiment over the Real or Ultimate Reality might be asnegligible but because he is non in duologue here with disciples of other faithtraditions this has to be regarded as an premise. While Hick puts up a gooddefence in his book, I do non believe that it is sufficient. In seeking toestablish a manner of covering with conflicting and sole truth claims henegates them all in his refusal to accept their differences. His proposal of acommon land i. e. the ‘ Real’might have been more convincing had he dialoguedwith theologists and philosophers from faith traditions other thanChrisitianity.

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