

# Theology essays – rainbow of faiths



## **Evaluate John Hick ' s defense mechanism of his place in his book, *The Rainbow of Faiths***

This paper will measure John Hick ' s defense mechanism of his position in his book *The Rainbow of Faiths* ( Hick, J. 1995 ) . Get downing with a brief historical and theological background to the argument the paper will then review Hick ' s book and buttocks whether or not Hicks is successful in his defence of his version of spiritual pluralism which holds that:

*.. the great universe faiths constitute really different but so far as we can state more or less every bit valid ways of conceiving, living, and reacting in life to the ultimate world with which faith is concerned* ( Hick, 1995: 149 ) .

### Background

The argument about the nature and being of God, and most specifically for Christianity, of the individual Christ arose out of the 18<sup>th</sup> century arguments over ground and faith. Natural divinity and its arguments for the being of God had tended to disregard Christ. With Kant and later Schleiermacher, linguistic communication about God became closely related to linguistic communication about Christ—even though there was the inclination to do Jesus a mere illustration of the moral and spiritual life. With Barth nevertheless, Christ is put at the Centre of theology. In Barth ' s divinity it is merely in the Embodiment that we have knowledge of God in his transcendency. Subsequent late nineteenth and early twentieth developments, peculiarly the outgrowth of the comparative survey of religion, demonstrated a cardinal job between Barth ' s vision of Christ, and the viing claims of other spiritual traditions. Barth referred to dialogue 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 of a Christian divinity of faiths and the dialogue of faiths?* ( Clooney, 1989: 201 ) .

### Hick and the Rainbow of Faiths

John Hick saw that it would be really hard to preserve a Christ centered religion when it came to the brush with other world religions. Therefore in his earlier work he maintained that what was needed was a Copernican revolution in Christianity whereby it ceased to be Christ centered and God was restored to the Centre. This common Centre, he argued, would form the footing of a divinity of universe faiths ( Hick, 1977 ) . Hick forewords *The Rainbow of Faiths* with mention to ( at the clip of composing 1995 ) the deepening theological crisis of Christianity at the terminal of the twentieth century. This crisis is apparent in the rational job that the existence of diverse faiths nowadays and that, Hick maintains, is apparent as both a theological and a philosophical job. His major concern is with one aspect of the crisis and that is the response of the assorted spiritual traditions to the Divine, the Ultimate, or what Hick calls the Real.

The book was developed from the writer ' s Auburn Lectures given at Union Theological Seminary in April 1994. Hick frames the defence of his place as a dialogue with two spouses they are a philosopher, whom he calls Phil, and a theologian called Grace. The parts of Hick ' s dialogue partners Phil and Grace were adopted by two PhD pupils during the Auburn lectures.

Hick uses the rainbow in the rubric as a metaphor for the manner in which the Godhead visible radiation of God is reflected in the rays of the universe ' s faith traditions. His very pick of rubric and his explanation of it in the

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foreword is, arguably, representative of his pluralist place. In referring to his pick of a duologue for bordering the rational job that he maintains is apparent in divinity and doctrine Hick provinces:

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

Hick argues that although the inquiry of pluralism is a controversial 1 for the churches, who, he maintains, veer from conservative orthodoxy to broad relativism, his purpose however is to convince his duologue spouses and his readers that a plural attack is permissible within a Christian model and that it is pulling the interest to an increasing figure of people, both Christian and non-Christian. On the appropriateness of a divinity of universe faiths Hick contends that:

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

Hick discusses what he sees as the fallacy of Christian moral domination, which sees Christianity as the only religion that was founded by God and that those who espouse Christianity have a closer relationship with God than do others, because the fruits of being a Christian are said to be apparent in a Christian ' s life. Hick inquiries whether this can be supported and established through empirical observation or whether it is an a priori claim, or a affair of

first and preexistent rule. He speaks of the multi-faith nature of modern-day society and how Britain in particular has seen a alteration to its spiritual landscape since the Second World War and the migration of many former commonwealth citizens. He goes on to state that the appearance of numbers of different topographic points of worship, and the fact that the newcomers are our neighbors has engendered the realisation that people from other religions are not so different from ourselves. He cites St. Paul's list of the fruits of the spirit as every bit apparent in the lives of those outside the tradition as they are within it. In scriptural divinity, Christians are supposed to be recognizable by the fact that their lives ground the fruits of the spirit, because these fruits, Hick contends, are besides apparent in the lives of non-Christians. How is it possible, he asks, to show that the fruits of Christian life are superior to the fruits of any other life. In position of this he argues that:

*The bearing of this upon a Christian divinity of faiths is that the deficiency of discernible moral high quality is at discrepancy with our traditional theology. I am led to reason that this divinity is in demand of alteration. For surely its map is to do sense of the facts, not to be a device for systematically disregarding or bellying them ( Hick, 1995: 15-16 ) .*

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

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

This of class, Hick contends, is contradictory because he has already demonstrated that the fruits of the spirit are nowadays in faith traditions other than Christianity, and besides in non-religious people. Although here it may be argued that he has not so much demonstrated the fact that these fruits can be seen in the lives of people of other religions ( because he names not one specific incidence ) as asserted it, that is not to state that the position of Christian moral domination that Hick criticizes is any the less an averment if one does not subscribe to it. Hick maintains that it is the fruits that are of import and uses Bible to endorse up his claim that Jesus was more interested in how work forces and adult females lived their lives than in theological propositions. He so goes on to contend that we look at salvation as *a alteration in human beings-a alteration which can be identified-when it can be identified-by its moral fruits ( 1995: 17 )* . This he sees as central to all the universe ' s religions, the transmutation of human life, a motion from self-centredness to a foundation in God, or what Hick chooses to name, *the Real ( 1995: 18 )* . Whether this foundation could, or should be applied to Buddhism would depend on which Buddhist way one was mentioning to.

Disciples of all faiths, Hick maintains, have their lives transformed by this turning towards the existent. He asserts that all the universe faiths are not truly doctrines or theologies but 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 the Judao-Christian and Muslim religions, who might see their faith as oriented towards lauding God instead than salvation/liberation. What Hick calls the hybrid term salvation/liberation, is, he states the cardinal concern of all religious traditions. Hick so goes on to talk of typologies of world religion divinities, he refers to the sole, inclusive and pluralist positions mentioned earlier. In relation to exclusivity where redemption is confined to Christians. De Costa ( 1986 ) who besides rejects exclusivism, says of it that its cardinal claim is:

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

In his ain rebuttal of exclusivism, Hick refers specifically to the Roman Catholic Church which used to keep that there was no redemption outside of the church of Rome, a place that was rejected at the Second Vatican Council. The position that redemption is confined to Christians is 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 and men, so it is, as I have been reminding us, an discernible fact that this has not been restricted either to any subdivision of Christianity or to Christianity as a whole. Given this really concrete construct of salvation/liberation then Christian exclusivism is non a unrecorded option ( Hicks, 1995: 19-20 ) .*

Presents, the Catholic church, and the majority of Protestants would ( so Hick maintains ) hold to an inclusivist viewpoint. This nevertheless, can take a



assortment of signifiers, the inclusivism of theologians 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 sufficient for redemption apart from Christ, for Christ entirely is saviour ( Race, 1985: 38 ) .*

As Hick notes, there are a figure of different fluctuations on the inclusivist place and De Costa take the position of the Roman Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner. Peoples of other religions can be included in Christian redemption under Rahner ' s construct of ' anonymous Christian. ' Hick besides refers to the salvation/liberation theoretical account of inclusivism as found in Panniker ' s ( 1981 ) work ( the statement is that the transmutation evident in the lives of people of other faiths agencies that they follow Christ but may non recognize it ) Hick argues that this is not truly a Christian inclusivism, instead, he maintains, this version is closer to his ain impression of pluralism.

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

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

One wonders whether Hick might besides be accused of this since while he dismisses it as a Christian inclusivism and argues that it is closer to his ain version of pluralism, could he non besides be criticized for minimising the

individualities of the universe ' s spiritual traditions? This, it might be argued, is a absolutely valid inquiry, peculiarly as Hick then goes on to mention to the widely differing truth claims and constructs of God of the 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 they are all inaccurate, in that they all necessarily distort ( Hick, 1995: 27 ) .*

I would argue that this is an unfortunate analogy as it appears as though, if we took too much note of what Hick is stating here so we might be merely every bit likely to wonder whether any faith has any usage at all! Certainly De Costa ( 1986 ) when referring to Hick's earlier work, maintains that Hick ' s effort to free the religions of sole truth claims may good intend that there is nil left of religion.

Hick ' s place is that all of the world religions are grounded in the same world:  
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*the Ultimate indefinable Reality is capable of being authentically experienced in footings of different sets of human constructs, as Jaweh, as the Holy Trinity, as Allah. occurring at the interface between the Real and our differing spiritual outlooks and civilizations ( Hick, 1995: 23 ) .*

Hick uses Kant ' s differentiation between the noumena ( 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 of religions is what Hick defines as a *deep regard for the human household* ( 1995: 118 ). Numerous observers, nevertheless, have questioned the position of a common human history, acknowledging that such a position stems from the political orientation of the Enlightenment and the mentality that accompanied colonial imperialism. Feminist observers in particular have highlighted how the discourses of the Enlightenment, that claimed to talk for all, really oppressed at least half the human race by presuming a common historical experience. Such discourses feminists contend violate the most basic right, that of the human individual to be 'other' than the norm. It is this premise of commonality that I would argue poses a serious menace to Hick's place. Hick dismisses the thought that differences of sentiment over the Real or Ultimate Reality might be as negligible but because he is not in dialogue here with disciples of other faith traditions this has to be regarded as an premise. While Hick puts up a good defence in his book, I do not believe that it is sufficient. In seeking to establish a manner of covering with conflicting and sole truth claims he negates them all in his refusal to accept their differences. His proposal of a common land i. e. the 'Real' might have been more convincing had he dialogued with theologians and philosophers from faith traditions other than Christianity.

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