

John Hick's Epistemological Framework Reconsidered

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It is well-known that John Hick's commitment to Immanuel Kant's epistemic schema lays the foundation for developing a theology of religious pluralism.¹ But, what exactly is the validity of Hick's religious epistemology? Is it legitimate to adapt Kantian epistemological categories, *mutatis mutandis*, to form an epistemology of religious pluralism? Does Hick's epistemology provide a sound basis upon which to build a full-blown theology of pluralism?

Kantian Categories and the Attainment of Knowledge

To begin with, it is important to offer what Kant believed regarding the attainment of human knowledge and an assessment of his project. Kant initiated his own "Copernican revolution" when he challenged philosophers with a new theory of knowledge. The human mind contains categories that structure all sense perceptions and these categories are necessary for understanding the phenomenal world of experience. Rather than our knowledge adjusting to sensory input, the sensory input adjusts to our knowledge.

Knowledge of the phenomenal world consists of a combination of *content* and *form*. Content is the "stuff" of sense perception, it is what is given to the mind. Without content or sense experience there would be no genuine knowledge. Yet, content alone is not sufficient for human knowledge to obtain. It must have a place to go or a space to fill in the human mind. Forms are the categories into which we fit the content of all sense perception. Without sense perception, the categories would be empty space.

Sense perceptions, then, are received through these categories that subsist in the mind. That is, there is no objective thing-in-itself (*Ding an sich*) that can be perceived. Since all experience is filtered first through the *a priori* operations of the mind, what turns out to be known is the object as it appears. Consequently, a wall is erected between two continua: the *noumena* (the world-in-itself) and the *phenomena* (the world as it appears). It is as if life is seen through the tube of a black and white television. The viewing is a mere "representation" of what the (colorful) world-in-itself looks like. Sensory percepts are always modified by *a priori* concepts, capable of seeing only the "black and white" world.

What makes human knowledge possible, according to Kant, are the *a priori* categories uncovered by a process of "transcendental deduction." Though his epistemological system is "transcendentally ideal," because there is no direct knowledge of the *noumenal* world-in-itself, we do have the *phenomenal* world of sense perceptions whereby we can know something with universality and necessity, *qua* phenomena. Kant maintained that sense data is organized by the mind's categories, some of which include unity, plurality, causality, time, and space. These are *a priori* conditions under which we can have knowledge of the external phenomenal world. However, they do not serve to offer any help in knowing the noumenal world, or things-in-themselves. This is the transcendental world that can only be postulated by reason.

The theological implication is that reliable, objective knowledge about God cannot be obtained, since God is restricted to the noumenal realm and nothing of this realm can be directly apprehended. God cannot be experienced, only postulated. Human knowledge is limited to the phenomenal world—the world as it appears.

This sharp distinction between the noumena and phenomena is not without its problems.² Nevertheless, I believe the contributions of Kant can have significant impact upon developing a viable religious epistemology. However, an epistemology that has its foundation in Kant should cohere with what Kant himself believed. It is to this concern that I now turn in evaluating John Hick's religious epistemology. I will argue that Hick has misused the Kantian schema in order to make his religious pluralism work.

John Hick's Religious Epistemology

John Hick saw advantages for his own epistemology of religion in the distinctions Kant drew between the *noumena* and the *phenomena*.³ Hick's *Real an sich* is analogous to Kant's *noumena*, whereas the various human responses to the *Real an sich* are analogous to the Kant's *phenomena*. Hick claims, however, that the categories for interpreting religious experiences are culture-relative and not universal to all human minds as Kant maintained.⁴ Hick's religious epistemology approaches an anthropocentric rather than Theocentric model of religious truth. That is, meaning is not derived from, but imposed upon the perceived environment by the human mind. Yet, having embraced the Kantian scheme, Hick initiated his own type of Copernican revolution against the exclusivism of Christianity. He writes,

the Copernican revolution in theology must . . . involve a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the center to the thought that it is God who is at the center and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him.⁵

Highlighting the similarities between Hick and Kant, Gerard Loughlin, somewhat satirically, states:

Hitherto it has been assumed that all our knowledge of ultimate reality or the Real must conform to it. But all attempts to extend our knowledge of the Real by establishing something in regard to it *a priori*, by means of concepts, have, on this assumption, ended in failure. We must therefore make trial whether we may not have more success, in the truth of metaphysics, if we suppose that the Real must conform to our knowledge.⁶

The final result for John Hick's adaptation of Kant's epistemology is that all religions are best understood "as different phenomenal experiences of the one divine noumenon."⁷ Thus, the religious Ultimate is never directly encountered by experience, but is an inference from religious experience. According to Hick, Yahweh, Allah, Krishna, Shiva, Brahman, *et al.* make up the divine phenomena and constitute culturally-conditioned responses to the same religious Ultimate.⁸

While there is little question that there exists a distinction between the "transcendent reality" and the "varying human responses," how can one be reasonably certain that the "responses" are genuine manifestations of the same religious Ultimate? Hick insists upon some kind of existential continuity between the *Real an sich* and the varying human responses. He explains: "although we cannot speak of the *Real an sich* in literal terms, nevertheless we live inescapably in relation to it, and in all that we do and undergo we are having to do with it as well."⁹ But, the continuity for Hick appears to be merely practical, not rational, since nothing literally can be said about the *Real an sich*.

So, what exactly is the nature of this relationship between the *Real an sich* and ourselves? If we live in relation to the religious Ultimate, how can we assert something about that which

nothing literally can be asserted? Since "none of the descriptive terms that apply within the realm of human experience can apply literally to the unexperientiable reality that underlies that real,"¹⁰ how can anything informative whatsoever be said about this "unexperientiable reality?" Indeed, Harold Netland, a former student of Hick, states that

the set of true propositions about a given image (e.g. Allah, or Amida Buddha) must form a subset of the set of all true propositions about the [religious Ultimate] as it is in itself. For if this were not the case then it is hard to see how the various images of the divine could be considered at all informative about the [religious Ultimate]. Indeed, there would be little reason for referring to them as images of the divine reality.¹¹

Hick claims that no "substantial properties" (such as "being good," "powerful," "having knowledge") can be applied to the Real *an sich*.¹² Yet, it would appear that the property of 'self-subsistence' or 'ontological independence' is a substantial property. So, the sentence that we "live inescapably in relation to [the Real]" cannot be literally true or false, since we cannot affirm the existence or non-existence of the Real. Therefore, this not only approaches meaninglessness, but also makes Hick's Real *an sich* inane. In addition, how can the Real *an sich* be the ground of all religious experience? What rational justification does one have to subscribe to the existence or religious-experience-producing nature of Hick's Real *an sich*? I suspect there is very little, if any at all.

Trying to describe the relationship between the noumenon and the phenomena, as well as how the phenomenal world of sense perception is constructed in the mind, it appears Hick ends up defeating his own purposes. Though he states that all we are "entitled to say about the noumenal source of this information is that it is the reality whose influence *produces*, in collaboration with the human mind, the phenomenal world of our experience,"¹³ he creates a bigger problem than he is able to solve. If the input produced is, in any sense, informational, does this information become transformed into metaphor when we try to communicate it? Hick indicates this is the case.¹⁴

But, if it can be said that the noumenal source influences or produces religious experiences, then this assumes far more than Hick may be willing to admit. First, the noumenal source exists. Second, it informs the human mind. Third, it produces religious experiences. If any of the previous three statements are only metaphorically true and not literally true, then it seems Hick has lost considerable ground for his main hypothesis, namely, that the Real *an sich* cannot literally exist, inform, or produce!

Furthermore, how is it we are entitled to "say" anything meaningful about the noumenon? If we do, it cannot be "literally" meaningful, according to Hick. How can it be meaningful to assert that it is "metaphorically" true that the noumenon is a "source" or that it "produces" the phenomenal world? Is Hick implicitly having to admit the use of non-metaphorical concepts in order to refer to the Real *an sich*? It appears that, in an effort to nullify any substantial metaphysical claims about the religious Ultimate, Hick has pulled the rug out from underneath a tenable epistemology of religion.

Hick realized this potential problem and sought to answer it.

If we can say virtually nothing about [the Real *an sich*], why affirm its existence? The answer is that the reality or non-reality of the postulated noumenal ground of the experienced religious phenomena constitutes the difference between a religious and a

naturalistic interpretation of religion. If there is no such transcendent ground, the various forms of religious experience are purely human projections. If on the other hand there is such a transcendent ground, then these phenomena may be joint products of the universal presence of the Transcendent . . . To affirm the Real is thus to affirm that religious experience is not solely a construction of our human imagination but is a response—though always a culturally conditioned response—to the Real.¹⁵

He states that a naturalistic interpretation of religious experience is not preferable, since it may merely be a projection of the human mind. Therefore, Hick's religious Ultimate wins out by default. However, this is clearly a case of bifurcation, viz., all religious phenomena are either a product of human imagination or a genuine response to Hick's Real. Moreover, why not claim that the various forms of religious experience outside of historical, biblical Christianity are projections of the human mind, depraved as it were, by the effects of sin (Rom. 1:21-23)?

Most importantly, however, Hick leaves the most significant question unanswered in his use of Kant's noumenon/phenomena distinctions: "If the existence of the noumenal Real is independent of religious experience, yet somehow related to it, how is the inconceivable conceived/experienced?" The only possible venue Hick has is the use of mythological language. In fact, myth is the bridge between noumenon and phenomena. Hick claims that the various mythological representations of the world's religions are "true in so far as the responses which they tend to elicit are in soteriological alignment with the Real. Their truthfulness is the practical truthfulness which consists in guiding us aright."¹⁶ Yet, the line drawn by Hick between truth and significance is blurred beyond recognition. Truth is merely a matter of pragmatics not dogmatics; orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy. It is prescriptive, not descriptive; myth, not fact. Without question, it becomes clear that Hick's defense of the pluralistic hypothesis is to

convert the inconsistent doctrines of the different religions into myths and then to claim that these myths only trivially differ from one another in their schematizations of the noumenal Real . . . This move neatly dispenses altogether with the issue of the specific truth-claims expressed by the often contrary doctrines of the religious traditions. Thus all . . . religions, despite their marked differences in basic teachings are more or less valid . . . not for any intrinsic reason connected with what they specifically teach but because they all evoke human self-transcendence in relation to the Real.¹⁷

Also, Hick's epistemology that supports his pluralistic hypothesis has little explanatory power. To say that the mythological representations of the Real *an sich* are true in so far as they bring about the appropriate responses, and then to offer the appropriate responses as evidence that the myths are true is question-begging of the first order.¹⁸ Moreover, the criterion of "practical truthfulness" which "guides us aright" does nothing to tell us what is at work in the definition of "aright." Likewise, if the Real cannot be described in literal terms, what kind of truth is being promulgated? This is a mixing of concepts where the utility of a religion and its truthfulness are not necessarily related. Ethics and epistemology are distinct categories.

To confuse the issue of truth with the response to truth is a basic epistemological mistake. The category of truth and the category of human response are not the same thing, just as meaning and significance aren't the same. Furthermore, the entire pluralistic hypothesis reduces the substantial truth-claims of all the religious traditions of the world to culturally-conditioned notions that don't say anything universally valid, metaphysically substantive, or cognitively informative. The viability of Hick's religious pluralism rests *solely* upon its power to orient

persons toward some unknowable, inexpressible, seemingly vacuous noumenal Real. It is simply too much to ask of the religious traditions of the world to relegate their essential metaphysical claims, which substantiate their entire system, to a secondary status. Likewise, it is truly ironic that Hick expects all religions to respect one another *except for the one doctrine that each of the world religions hold dear*, viz., that *they* have, a unique answer for our greatest need: salvation/liberation/enlightenment!

In confusing meaning with consequences, Hick falls into the error of conceptual relativism or universalist perspectivalism. Paul Griffiths explains.

[John Hick's] position is perspectivalist in that it claims that religious communities 'embody different perspectives and conceptions of, and correspondingly different responses to, the real or ultimate'; it is universalist in that the attempt to discriminate among these different conceptions, to judge that some are adequate and some are not, is rejected.¹⁹

In addition, Hick claims there is no conflict between the world's religions because they are not "factual hypotheses." With this, Hick implies that one can have truth without facts. That certain of the world's great religious traditions assert a multitude of facts seems to go unnoticed by Hick. Of course, he is speaking of practical truthfulness. But, Hick is creating a false dichotomy here between practical truth and facts. How they are separate is never made clear. One could not have truth without facts. Truth in the human mind requires agreement or conformity of the mind to the facts of reality. Conversely, falsity entails the opposite. This, of course, requires that there exists a mind-independent reality to which the human intellect conforms. Nevertheless, given this assumption, truth is believing what is, is, or what is not, is not. Truth, therefore, applies to matters of fact.

Hick provides a soteriological criterion for grading all religions which is "the gradual transformation of human existence from self-centredness to Reality-centredness."²⁰ When this criterion is offered, it comes dangerously close to the absolute claims Hick is so eager to avoid. Though not completely arbitrary, Hick's soteriological criterion presupposes certain anthropological and theological claims that *are* arbitrary without a tenable epistemology or divine revelatory source. Similarly, with all the conflicting reports about the human condition (Advaita Vedanta Hinduism claims ignorance, whereas Christianity claims sin as the fundamental human problem), "soteriological alignment" to what and from what is nothing more than an empty place-holder.

Moreover, Hick regards contradictory ways of salvation in the religious traditions as complementary. How he reconciles the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism with the Five Pillars of Islam, or release from *samsara* in Theravada Buddhism with justification by faith alone in Protestant Evangelicalism is impossible to apprehend. Hick must radically redefine their essential claims to show compatibility. While Hick may think he has done this successfully, it is highly unlikely he will obtain any converts, since conversion would necessarily entail denial of central propositions held by the respective traditions.

Truth in Religious Pluralism: Constant Variables?

Given the clear disjunction between the Real *an sich* and the varied manifestations of it in the world's religions, Hick's view of revelation remains to be shown. He made it clear early on in his move toward religious pluralism that revelation is non-propositional. By this he means that

revelation is not a divine promulgation of propositions, nor is faith a believing of such propositions. The theological propositions formulated on the basis of revelation have a secondary status. They do not constitute the content of God's self-revelation but are human and therefore fallible verbalizations.²¹

But Hick does not sufficiently show why it is necessary that human theological propositions based upon revelation are necessarily fallible. He assumes *a priori* that *because they are human*, theological propositions cannot be infallible. This is another instance of a false dichotomy. It is possible that theological propositions could be both human and infallible given divine inspiration. God could so superintend a human writer's work that what is freely written is precisely what God intended to communicate. Moreover, Paul R. Eddy demonstrates how this surrender to a fallible, non-propositional view of revelation opens up the possibility of several metaphysical premises which illuminate the framework of Hick's entire religious system.

- the world is religiously ambiguous (apparent contradiction in religious diversity)
- humanity operates within the sphere of cognitive freedom whereby, in accordance with the religious ambiguity of the world, there is an "epistemic distance" between the religious Ultimate and creation
- faith in the religious Ultimate is *interpretation* of experiences in religious ways
- the religious Ultimate reveals itself in a manner which is capable of being interpreted either revelationally or non-revelationally²²

Though the personal dimension is important in response to propositional revelation, it is not necessary to emphasize the frame at the expense of the picture. What goes on inside a person's conceptual framework is a matter of factual truth, as well as practical truth (= religiously significant). Though the development of an individual's conceptual framework may, in some sense and to some degree, be geographically and culturally conditioned, it seems intellectually irresponsible *to emphasize interpretation of the facts at the expense of the facts themselves*.

In fact, to believe intentionally what is factually untrue is the height of superstition. One has an epistemic duty to align beliefs with the facts.²³ When this does not occur, then myth and metaphor become truth. Likewise, to take what is factually untrue as religiously significant is pure irrationalism, where significance is person-relative and devoid of facts. One's beliefs, interpretations, and convictions that are understood to be universally true for all people, everywhere, and at all times must be grounded in some objective state of affairs that can be confirmed or disconfirmed by evidence, reason, and revelation. And religious beliefs can be practically *and* factually true. Otherwise, we would have as many religions as we do people, and it is doubtful that Hick would allow his pluralism to go this far.

This brings us to the nature of religious truth. For Hick, religious truth is mythical; it is the product of human responses to the religious Ultimate. These *a posteriori* responses are geographically and culturally conditioned. Therefore, religious truth is not a product of God's communication to humans, but merely what various cultures have believed is true regarding the religious Ultimate. This anthropocentric model for truth is necessary for Hick's religious pluralism to work. Religious truth is a subjective response rather than an objective proposition to be confirmed or disconfirmed.

We find, however, another instance of a false dichotomy being staged by Hick in demanding that religious truth be either propositional or personal. Is it not logically possible that both could be correct? For example, if I make the claim that 'God loves me' I am making at least

three propositional statements: 1) 'God exists,' 2) 'I exist,' and 3) 'a relationship exists between God and me.' The statement 'God loves me' is profoundly personal, but is not devoid of propositional statements that are fact-asserting. It is not logically necessary to assume *a priori* that religious truth cannot be a personal proposition that genuinely describes a verifiable state of affairs.

The Nature of Truth and Historical Information

Several considerations must be taken into account before a legitimate epistemology of religion can be developed. While Hick's elaborate treatment of religious epistemology is systematically developed, it ends up redefining the central claims of the world's major religious traditions in order to fit his pluralistic model.

Because Hick locates the property of truth, not in religious propositions themselves, but in the communal memories of persons who interpret their experiences religiously, he believes he has escaped the incompatibility of religious truth-claims. But, can experience and/or interpretation take place in an historical vacuum? Take for instance the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Hick juxtaposes the Islamic position against the Christian tradition that it either was or was not Jesus of Nazareth who died by crucifixion. Hick calls this, and other issues, a penultimate matter since

differences of historical judgment, although having their own proper importance, do not prevent the different traditions from being effective, and so far as we can tell more or less equally effective, contexts of salvation. Evidently, then, it is not necessary for salvation that we should have correct historical information. . . . However, [the different religious traditions] cannot all be wholly true; probably none is wholly true; perhaps all are partly true. But the salvific process has been going on through the centuries despite this unknown distribution of truth and falsity.²⁴

Now if (a) "the salvific process has been going on through the centuries despite this unknown distribution of truth and falsity," and (b) Christianity insists upon correct historical information regarding the death and resurrection of Jesus for one's soteriological status to be effective, then (c) Christianity is in error regarding salvation. If this is true, then Hick has no basis to affirm that salvation is "going on" within Christianity. Yet, this seems inconsistent with what Hick wants to say about Christianity. If he believes the salvific process is occurring within Christianity, then he must divorce the basis for this claim from the historical fact of the crucifixion of Jesus.

So, on what basis can Hick *know* that the salvation process has been going on within Christianity? It is clear that he cannot claim this "truth" has been revealed to him. If it is intuitive, he can never know if he is correct, since others intuit differently. Even if everyone had the same intuition regarding salvation, it is still logically possible that all are wrong.

Besides, the disciples of Jesus claimed to have correct historical information regarding the death of Jesus and that this information was not simply a human projection (1 Cor. 15:3-4). What the disciples of Jesus saw regarding his death and resurrection, what they subsequently wrote about, and what really occurred are all one and the same. So, if there is an objective mind-independent reality, viz., "the death of Jesus," that occurred in the first century, and the disciples claimed to have witnessed it, what is the problem with labeling it historically accurate? Simply because the claimants are human and experienced it does not necessarily call for it being factually untrue, any more than claiming that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in

the nineteenth century is factually untrue because some human was at Ford's Theater and witnessed it. Therefore, propositions regarding historical information can either be true or they can be false. Historical information is not strictly person-relative; it is relative also to an actual state of affairs.

Religious Truth, Experience, and Revelation

Given the priority Hick puts on religious experience, the relationship between experience and truth requires some discussion. There is a personal, substantial, and formal triad existing in all human experience: the *perceiver*, the *perceived*, and the *perception*. Or, the perceiver is the subject, the perceived is the object, and the perception is the cognitive and metaphysical relationship between subject and object. All three are necessary before claims to religious experiences can legitimately be made. With this in mind there are two models of experience: the direct model and the mediated model, and it is possible that one's religious experience can be both direct and mediated.

In the direct model a person could claim to experience the omniscient God. One need not be omniscient to experience directly an omniscient God, just as we need not be highly intelligent in order to experience directly a highly intelligent person. "For if we are limited to experience of subjective sensations and *never* have any direct awareness of the objective reality which presumably causes those sensations, then how can we infer anything about that reality from the occurrence of the sensations?"²⁵ One who denies that experiences (religious or otherwise) can be a direct encounter of an actual, literal state of affairs, carries the burden of proof that the perceiver experiences something else other than the perceived.

On the other hand, experiences are interpretive; they are mediated through *a priori* categories of the mind. This does not necessarily require that all interpreted experiences are incredulous or false. Nor does it entail that all interpreted experiences are genuine human responses to the same religious Ultimate. Hick claims that "Adonai [of Judaism] and the Dharmakaya [of Mahayana Buddhism], although phenomenologically utterly different, may nevertheless both stand in their own soteriological alignment with the Real."²⁶

But without an adequate metaphysical and/or epistemological basis for this claim, this statement is without warrant. Moreover, apart from some revelatory vantage point, it becomes impossible for Hick's religious pluralism to obtain. The Christian Scriptures claim that Adonai is *ontologically* different from all other gods, and is not just one possible religious Ultimate among many (Isaiah 40). . The "ontological implications of the Judeo-Christian image of the divine as Yahweh . . . are incompatible with the ontological monism of the notion of Nurguna Brahman from Advaita Vedanta."²⁷ To claim that a person only experiences the perception and not the perceived *because it is interpreted*, gives the impression that religious experiences are resistant to all forms of verification.

Nevertheless, the position that all interpreted experiences are genuine human responses to the same religious Ultimate is the trump card which John Hick persistently plays. Even though most observations of the phenomenal world are filtered through the gridwork of one's prior beliefs, it does not necessarily demand the kind of religious pluralism Hick postulates. Yet, his non-propositional view of divine revelation demands that religious claims of ultimacy are wrong. When religious phenomena are absolutized, then, despite the degree of correspondence to an actual state of affairs, the uniqueness of any religious claim cannot be held on to. But, how does Hick *know* this, given his position that revelation is not only non-propositional and non-literal, but mythical human accounts of the same religious Ultimate?

Hick's epistemology flounders when used to justify the contention that, in the words of Griffiths, "any religious community that claims cognitive superiority for its set of doctrine-expressing sentences over that of another religious tradition must be making a false claim."²⁸ As elaborate as it may seem, Hick's epistemic foundation appears to be another finite opinion in the plethora of religious pluralism from which dogmas tentatively and sporadically emerge! Unless Hick can demonstrate the superiority of his own vantage point that allows him to trivialize and relativize the truth-claims of the world's religions, it becomes very difficult indeed to believe him. How can Hick epistemically disqualify any absolute truth-claim without himself doing this very thing? As Lesslie Newbigin cogently attests:

there is an appearance of humility in the protestation that the truth is much greater than any one of us can grasp, but if this is used to invalidate all claims to discern the truth it is in fact an arrogant claim to a kind of knowledge which is superior to the knowledge which is available to fallible human beings. We have to ask, 'How do you know that the truth about God is greater than what is revealed to us in Jesus?'"²⁹

Surely Hick cannot expect his religious pluralism to be taken seriously when he cannot offer a viable means of epistemically justifying his truth-claims! Without setting forth, in clear terms, what his epistemological vantage point is from which he can objectively evaluate the exclusivist religions of the world, he has little basis for relativizing their truth-claims, or absolutizing his own. It is genuinely ironic that Hick's pluralism, as open-ended as he wants it to be, does not have space for the exclusive claims of Christianity. By forcing a choice between (a) the historically reliable and religiously significant events of Jesus' crucifixion, or (b) an innovation and radical reinterpretation of that event, Hick has made himself out to be a selective pluralist, if not a convoluted exclusivist!

In conclusion, the quest for truth in religion requires that one start somewhere and with some type of presupposition to avoid suffering the death of a thousand qualifications. Accordingly, any effort to develop a tenable Christian epistemology of religion, ought to insist that human experience and reason comports with a logically consistent, historically responsible, and biblically faithful position as an adequate basis from which to begin. Whether starting with reason or experience, it is not necessary that one be excluded at the expense of the other. Both are important for an adequate religious epistemology to be advanced. Human knowledge is possible because *a priori* categories are imposed upon the external world of experience, as Kant has shown. I believe, however, it is also the case that the external world of experience shapes and reshapes, to a degree, the mind's categories for interpretation of religious experiences. And, when there is correspondence between God's mind and the perceiving human mind, then truth results.

—ENDNOTES—

1. Cf., for example, John Hick's *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 240-241.
2. In fact, the categories present a problem for Kant in even assuming the existence of a noumenal reality. Groothuis explains: "Kant . . . grants that there is a reality outside of the human mind that affects the human mind or at least contributes somehow to our knowledge. But it seems Kant is barred from saying that things in themselves can cause anything because the concept of causation is only employable through the categories in

relation to empirical knowledge. The category of existence can only be employed empirically. Then how can we say that things in themselves even exist at all without contradiction?"

3. John Hick, *God Has Many Names* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1982), 103.
4. Hick, *Interpretation*, 243-244.
5. Hick, *Names*, 36.
6. Gerard Loughlin, "Noumenon and Phenomena," *Religious Studies* 23 (March, 1987): 493-508.
7. Hick, *Names*, 94. Note this is earlier Hick. Later, he explicitly says that the Real cannot be described as being one or many (cf., Hick, *Interpretation*, 350). It appears that as Hick's pluralistic hypothesis develops, so does his Real *an sich*.
8. Hick, *Interpretation*, 53-54.
9. *Ibid.*, 351.
10. *Ibid.*, 350.
11. Harold A. Netland, "Professor Hick on Religious Pluralism," *Religious Studies* 22 (September, 1986): 249-261.
12. Hick, *Interpretation*, 239.
13. Hick, *Interpretation*, 243, emphasis mine.
14. *Ibid.*, 350. Also, cf., *ibid.*, 246.
15. John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster, 1994), 143.
16. Hick, *Interpretation*, 375.
17. Kenneth Thomas Rose, "Knowing the Real: John Hick on the Cognitivity of Religions and Religious Pluralism," Ph.D. dissertation, (Harvard University, 1992), 110-111.
18. *Ibid.*, 111, n. 120.
19. Paul J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 47.
20. Cf., John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism*, 67-87.
21. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1988), 30.
22. Paraphrased from Paul R. Eddy, "John Hick's Theological Pilgrimage," *Proceedings of the Wheaton College Theology Conference* (1993), vol. 1, *The Challenge of Religious Pluralism: An Evangelical Analysis and Response*, 28-29.
23. Mortimer J. Adler, *Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), 64-65. Of course, one can hold false beliefs and still be rational, e.g., believing in a flat earth. I am primarily referring to deliberate beliefs *against* the facts.
24. Hick, *Metaphor*, 146-147. Though this statement hinges, in important ways, on what Hick means by "salvation," it is used here to demonstrate the relativism of his epistemology.
25. C. Stephen Evans, *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking about Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 84.
26. Hick, *Interpretation*, 373.
27. Harold A. Netland, "Exclusivism, Tolerance and Truth," *Missiology* 15 (1987): 86.
28. *Ibid.*, 50.
29. Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 170.