

Some Criticisms of Hickean Transcendental Pluralism

- (1) Hick has to describe religions as other than their adherents take them to be. He says that the “gods” religious believers believe in are not the real thing.
- (2) In applying the Kantian phenomena/noumena distinction to religion, Hick has made it impossible to talk meaningfully of revelation. The religious noumenon is in principle unknowable.
- (3) Hick undermines genuine differences between traditions.
- (4) Hick’s claim that the majority of religious truth-claims are mythological (or “practically true”) is far too weak as an account of religious truth. Unless religions can make propositional truth-claims, they are deprived of the ability to convey information.
- (5) Hick’s form of pluralism does not provide a convincing account of religions such as Buddhism. Religions that do not recognize a divinity will always be anomalous on Hick’s theory.
- (6) Hick claims that, ultimately, all religions advocate the same goal: namely, the shift from self-centredness to reality-centredness. Hence he claims that core religious concepts in different traditions —such as “salvation”, “liberation”, “enlightenment”, “*moksha*”—are all roughly equivalent. This is highly implausible.
- (7) Hick does not give a plausible account of morally motivated atheists. He ends up characterizing them as, in essence, anonymous theists, who are best viewed as responding to “the Real” (which is how he refers to the mooted noumenal reality lying behind religious experience). Surely this is susceptible to the same criticism that Hick levels at Karl Rahner’s theory of the “anonymous Christian”.