

such an explanation, is a tissue of inconsistencies, the better placed we will be to offer a possibly true account of religious plurality.

It Is Not Reasonable to Believe that Only One Religion Is True

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1 Introduction

There is a great variety of religions in the world. They differ one from another in doctrine, ethics, spirituality, institutional structure, historical claims, and so on. Could one of them be true? Yes of course: there is no incoherence in the thought that one of these traditions is true in its main doctrinal and historical claims and that all the others are false in their doctrines and historical beliefs where these conflict with the true religion. The real question is whether it is reasonable to suppose that this possibility is exemplified.

But the real question needs a great deal of refinement if we are to take it any further. First we must note that the idea of one "religion" being true rests upon an artificiality. The artificiality lies in the supposition that there are a number of discrete religions in the world, each united internally and separated externally from each other by a set of essential doctrines, ethical beliefs, and the like. In reality, entities such as "Christianity," "Buddhism," and "Hinduism" are semi-fictional.² What correspond to the labels are historical complexes found in many different cultures and exhibiting variety in belief, institution, and practice. In the case of Hinduism and Buddhism we must accept that the very idea that there are discrete religions with these labels is a creation of Western scholarship.³ "Christianity," "Buddhism," and the rest denote useful fictions. Any attempt to find an essence (say in the form of essential doctrines) amongst these semi-fictional entities is bound to result in legislation, with the scholar in effect deciding what he or she thinks is the "true" heart of the religion in question. This is transparently true in the instance of Buddhism, but holds even for Christianity, where the religion gave itself some definition in the form of conciliar documents. The conciliar statements of the Christian Church have been subject to markedly different interpretations in its later history. Things calling themselves branches of the Christian Church have added to, and in some instances departed from, conciliar pronouncements – usually in the name of recovering the "true" message of the founder.

What correspond to our labels are more or less loosely structured families of belief, action, and institution (how tight knit they are varies from case to case). It thus

² See P. J. Griffiths, *An Apology for Apologetics* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), p. 4.

³ See P. Almond, *The British Invention of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

behoooves us to note that our labels do not pick out watertight entities impervious to influence from other families. The religions have not been afraid of borrowing from each other.⁴

2 Philosophy and Religious Diversity

It looks as though our simple idea of one religion being true really is a question of whether one particular brand of, or strand within, one of the religions may be true. Is it reasonable to suppose that this is the case? How we proceed to answer the question depends on who we are. We may be dogmatists of a particular religion or branch thereof. Presumably, we would then answer the question dogmatically. Given the governing aim of seeking to articulate and to remain faithful to the world view of a particular brand of religion, it would be unreasonable not to deem that one's own particular faith was indeed true and other forms of faith false where they contradicted it. We may, on the other hand, be philosophers of religion when we answer the question. As such, I take it that we are not governed in our answer by the requirement to remain faithful to a particular brand of religion. We may end up arguing that some such brand provides the basis for the best answer to the question but will have to argue for that conclusion philosophically.

We can see why the question "Can any one religion be true?" is of interest to the philosophy of religion. The question highlights the fact that different brands of religion claim cognitive successes and achievements of various kinds. They claim to have a true account of the nature of sacred, transcendent reality. They claim to give a true analysis of the ills of the human condition and of what is required to achieve liberation or salvation from those ills. They claim that their spiritual, mystical traditions enable and record genuine encounters with the sacred, transcendent reality. They claim that their ethical principles and rules capture the right way for human beings to live. *Prima facie*, if the cognitive successes of one brand of religion in these regards are genuine, then some, perhaps many, of the achievements of other brands of religion are illusory. Philosophy likes to get involved in intellectual disputes and arguments which throw up interesting puzzles and arguments, and there seems to be no end of such puzzles and arguments provoked by these disagreements.

In addition, philosophy of religion has an interest in developing theories of the religious: theoretical accounts of the meaning and place of religion in human life and culture. Such theorizing impacts upon and is influenced by our interpretation of religious diversity. Consider a wholly naturalistic, secular interpretation of the religious such as we find in Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* and *The Lectures on the Essence of Religion*.⁵ On Feuerbach's account, those things we call "religions" are nothing other than the product of human nature (in the form of the structure of self-consciousness and of the character of human wishes) in its various historical and cultural settings. On this naturalistic interpretation, the religious life of the human

4 See W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1981).

5 L. Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, tr. M. A. Evans (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), and *idem*, *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, tr. R. Mannheim (New York: Harper and Row, 1967).

race does not arise out of any kind of contact between humanity and a divine or transcendent reality. It is the work of the imagination and what influences it. Naturalism in the interpretation of religion is given *prima facie* support by the picture of religious diversity and cognitive conflict we have alluded to. The picture seems to show that the human race has no reliable way of deciding which brands of religion attain cognitive success and which fall flat on their faces. More generally, the picture of the ebb and flow of religious movements and sects and of the constant elaboration of the human religious scene seems to point to the fact that humanity has not here embarked upon an enterprise in which sure knowledge of reality has been achieved, knowledge which accumulates and which can be built upon from generation to generation. It all looks like the lush product of the human imagination. Compare the question "Can any one scientific theory be true?" Noting the way in which science appears to accumulate reliable beliefs about the world and continues to lay down a deposit of such belief from one generation of investigators to the next, we might feel much happier answering that question with a "Yes."

3 Theories of Religious Diversity

Naturalism in the theory of religion contrasts with "confessionalism." This is the label I give to any view which states that one religion is indeed true and that we must view other religions in the light of that fact. It finds cognitive success in religion but confines it solely or primarily to one brand of religion. Confessionalism then divides into exclusivism and inclusivism. The confessional exclusivist thinks that the doctrines, ethics, salvific scheme, and spiritual paths of one religion have truth/success to the exclusion of those of other brands of religion. The confessional inclusivist modifies this divisive picture of the human religious scene. One brand of religion is true/successful and the measure of truth and success in religion as a whole. But other brands of religion are deemed to partake of this success. For example, it is a long-established view in Jewish theology that, while Judaism provides the true picture of God and his plans for human creatures, many people in other religions and cultures are on the path to salvation, to right relation with the God of Judaism. They are on this path if these cultures and religions teach and respect the Noahhite laws. These are a fundamental series of socio-ethical norms which are deemed not to be exclusive to Judaism at all. In short, this brand of Jewish, confessional inclusivism can find success in non-Jewish cultures and religions because it places great stress on the social and the ethical as the means of relating to God and allows ethical truth to be present even where people's theological theories are haywire (by the standards of Jewish orthodoxy). In a manner which might irritate some philosophers, it simply refuses to let successful relation with the divine depend overmuch on having the right theory of the divine.⁶

Note that the two forms of confessionalism agree on one fundamental point: one religion is sufficiently certain in its dogmatic formulations to be the means of interpreting the whole that is human religion. We can be assured that one brand of reli-

6 N. Solomon, "Is the Plurality of Faiths Problematic?," in A. Sharma (ed.), *God, Truth and Reality* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), pp. 189-99.

gion has the details of the nature of the divine sufficiently correct in order for it to be the means of judging the other brands.

To the question "Can any one religion be true?" the naturalist answers that we know enough to know that they are all false. The confessionalist answers "Yes; and we know that *this* one is in fact true." A third answer to the question is given by a pluralist theory of religion. Pluralism borrows from, yet differs from, both naturalism and confessionalism. The pluralist must ascribe cognitive success to a great many of the brands of human religion. (Neither the pluralist nor the confessionalist must attribute success to everything that has counted as a religious tradition in human history.) The pluralist must assert of each of the forms of religion covered by the theory that it provides people with real contact with a sacred, transcendent focus. Pluralism is not committed to asserting that no judgments of superiority of any kind can be made about religions; all that need be asserted is that there is the key cognitive equality mentioned.⁷

The affirmation of this cognitive success and equality does not distinguish pluralism from confessional inclusivism. To a minimal definition of pluralism we must add the element of skepticism or agnosticism with regard to the detailed dogmatic structure of a particular brand of religion. The pluralist must, on reasoned grounds, doubt whether the detailed dogmatics of any particular religion can be known with sufficient certainty to enable such a form of religion to be the means of interpreting the whole that is human religion. There is not the certainty in any particular form of religion to enable its world-view to be the basis for a viable interpretation of religion. In this way pluralism can agree that one brand of religion could conceivably be true while claiming that it is not reasonable for the philosophy of religion to judge of any one particular brand that it is true.

4 The Character of Pluralism

Pluralism as a theoretical response to religious diversity can now be summarily defined by three propositions.⁸ (1) All major forms of religion are equal in respect of making common reference to a single, transcendent sacred reality. (2) All major forms of religion are likewise equal in respect of offering some means or other to human salvation. (3) All religious traditions are to be seen as containing revisable, limited accounts of the nature of the sacred: none is certain enough in its particular dogmatic formulations to provide the norm for interpreting the others.

Now we can see how pluralism borrows from both the naturalist and the confessionalist responses to religious diversity and intellectual conflict and thus represents a compromise between them (whether it is a good compromise is another matter). Like the naturalist, the pluralist is impressed by the way in which the very fact of diversity argues against confessionalism. Diversity brings disagreement both in regard to

7 Some pluralists do appear to go for all-out equality. See J. Hick, "On Grading Religions," *Religious Studies*, 17 (1981), pp. 451-67, and *idem*, "On Conflicting Religious Truth Claims," *Religious Studies*, 19 (1983), pp. 485-91.

8 See P. Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), p. 12.

dogmas and in regard to the means for deciding which dogmas are true (different forms of religion have different, competing authority sources). Perceived lack of the means of adjudicating amongst these disagreements provokes a skeptical response. Take an example: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam overlap considerably in dogma and much else. An issue that divides Christianity from the other two is the status of Jesus of Nazareth in the continuing work of divine providence. The disagreement is many centuries old, and it remains unresolved. Both naturalist and pluralist infer that it is not resolvable. Moreover, diversity and disagreement suggest the following interpretation of it: religious diversity is explained by the setting of religious life in the concretely different forms of human culture. It has a natural, ready anthropological explanation: the influence of cultural forms and contingencies on the religious imagination. In this respect, both naturalist and pluralist favor a certain deconstruction of religious traditions. These traditions are, in at least some very large measure, the product of the same anthropological forces which shape other facets of culture. There is no need to think that their symbols or beliefs derive from knowledge of a divine being outside human life. This is a perspective which some argue is strongly suggested by the development of the empirical sciences of religion.⁹

If a partial commitment to a deconstructive anthropological perspective on religion is something which pluralism shares with naturalism, let it be noted that confessionalism is going to partake of this perspective in some measure as well. The exclusivist regards one particular strand within religion as cognitively successful and sees multiple error in all the other strands. Exclusivism must therefore conclude, surely, that while the adherents of these other strands of religion consider themselves to be in touch with a sacred, transcendent reality through their devotions, their thought and behavior have a thoroughly human explanation. These other strands of religion are indeed no more than expressions of the human imagination in its various historical and cultural settings. Inclusivism must likewise explain how, for all that many strands in human religious life are in touch with religious reality, forms of religion outside the favored one come to arrive at the erroneous conceptions they have of the nature of religious reality. Once again, appeal must be made to the culture-bound way in which these strands of religion have been formed.

The above points show that *all* of the general perspectives on human religion listed involve interpretations of the religions which depart from the "insider's" viewpoint. In the case of forms of naturalism, all brands of religion are interpreted through the categories of illusion. The pluralist regards all religions through the lens of some error theory, though that error theory is not so radical as the naturalist's. Confessionals are in this same boat. They will take one particular brand of religion on the terms which its adherents take for granted. But they will radically reinterpret other brands of religion in the very act of explaining them from the viewpoint of the favored brand of religion. How Christianity has seen Jewish faith has not been how Jews have seen it.

Some might be tempted to view the fact that interpretations of religion involve going beyond the self-understandings of religious believers as problematic. However, this need not be tantamount to reductionism. We must distinguish between descrip-

⁹ See J. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 1-2.

tive and explanatory reduction.¹⁰ In *describing* what believers say and do, we must acknowledge that they consider themselves to be making absolute claims. In *explaining* those claims, we have to consider them in the light of the phenomenon of religious diversity. Diversity and conflict amongst those claims tell us that they cannot all be true. The different theoretical options in explaining the diverse religious scene then present themselves. And all turn out to imply that, at the very least, the vast majority of these different sets of absolute claims cannot be accepted. An *explanatory* theory of religion must invoke error and the anthropological perspective.

Pluralism departs from naturalism and joins company with confessionalism in a basic realist commitment. The pluralist thinks that the religious traditions covered by the pluralist thesis are alike in making a successful reference to a sacred, transcendent reality. This is a judgment that the confessionalist will likewise make about one favored form of religion (exclusivism) or about very many traditions (inclusivism). Thus the pluralist goes only so far in the deconstructionist, anthropological reading of religious traditions favored by naturalism. Two questions about this realism immediately arise: "Is it at all coherent?" and "Are there any grounds on which it might rest?"

The doubt about the coherence of the realist postulate takes the following form. On the pluralist interpretation of the religions, specific forms of religion are theoretical failures. That is to say, the detailed theories they have about the focus of religion, the religious ultimate, cannot be judged to be true (in the present state of our knowledge, at least). Furthermore, the pluralist acknowledges that different forms of religion contain accounts of the nature of the sacred transcendent which are incompatible to some significant degree or other. How, given this failure and incompatibility, can they nonetheless be said to be successful in reference and to make the same reference? There is a ready response to this twofold problem which the pluralist can draw upon: in recent philosophy of language and philosophy of science the notion that reference can succeed in the presence of descriptive failure and that co-reference is possible between competing theories has been explored and defended. There is a broadly analogous problem in the philosophy of science. Interpreters of science may, for good reason, want to say of earlier scientific theories that they genuinely refer to things and stuffs that our present theories commit us to (for example, viruses, atoms, genes) even though these theories disagree with current definitions of these entities and thus are largely mistaken in their characterization of them (when judged by the norm of present theories). The answer to the conundrum from recent semantic theories is that reference is for the most part not a function of descriptive success, but of causality and context. (Readers can explore these ideas in the writings collected by Schwartz, in the works of Harré, and in Alston and Byrne.¹¹)

Let us swallow hard and suppose for the sake of argument that the pluralist can make use of these non-descriptive ideas of reference to get over the objections to the

¹⁰ See W. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).

¹¹ See S. P. Schwartz (ed.), *Naming and Necessity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); R. Harré, *The Varieties of Realism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), *passim*; W. P. Alston, "Referring to God," in Alston, *Divine Nature and Human Language* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 103–17; Byrne, *Prolegomena to Religious Pluralism*, pp. 39ff.

coherence of pluralism so far considered. On what might pluralism rest its interpretation of religion?

Pluralism is like confessionalism in endorsing a realist commitment within the various strands of religion to the existence of some sacred, transcendent absolute. It is like naturalism, but unlike confessionalism, in trying to offer a non-divisive picture of human religious life. So, to argue for pluralism is to argue for a non-divisive picture of religion which preserves a realist thrust to it.

Pluralists can argue for the non-divisive element in their portrait of religion by pressing the point that there is no brand of religion which stands out as an exception to the general perception created by the modern sciences of religion to the effect that all strands of human religion are integrally related to elements of human culture and history. From confessionalism's viewpoint there will be significant discontinuity in human history and culture – with one brand of religion being an exception to the rule that forms of religiosity have a socio-historico-anthropological explanation. Pluralists will have to contend that this confessionalist picture is implausible a priori and even more so empirically.

Confessionals must defend a kind of "exceptionalism": one strand in human religion resists the categories of explanation and interpretation found suitable for the other strands. The reasonableness of exceptionalism (and thus of pluralism, which is one form its denial may take) crucially depends on our estimation of the prospects of interreligious apologetics.¹² If exceptionalism is true, then one brand of religion can be picked out from the herd by means of both positive and negative apologetics. Its specific dogmatic claims can be shown to be true, or very probably true, by reference to positive arguments in their favor. Similar positive apologetic arguments are not available for the other brands of religion. The favored brand will likewise have negative apologetic arguments against the truth of rival brands and will be able to defeat the negative apologetic arguments directed against its own dogmas.

The pluralist is likely to be someone who is impressed by the fact that the great religions of the world are all systems of great antiquity and are associated with long histories of literate and developed religious argument and exegesis. As such, they all abound in positive apologetic arguments, have developed responses to negative apologetics, and have worked out negative apologetics against perceived rivals in their home cultures. Pluralists interpret this age-old dialectic as producing a mutual destruction of arguments.

5 For and Against Pluralism

We have here reached a Big Point in the argument about the interpretation of religious diversity. If we think that interreligious apologetics is fruitful and that it points to one strand of religion as true, showing that other strands are false insofar as they depart from this strand, then we have a case for confessionalism. If we return a negative verdict on the course of, and prospects for, interreligious apologetics, then plu-

¹² Much of what follows is indebted to the analysis in Griffiths, *Apology for Apologetics*, though his view and my view of prospects for success differ.

ralism or naturalism beckons. Now, some might hold that philosophy of religion must, as a subject, be committed to the viability of interreligious apologetics. The "must" derives from the fact that philosophy is of its nature an argumentative, dialectical subject. Even if none of the brands of human religion have come up with successful positive and negative apologetic strategies to date, it is the job of the philosopher to find the arguments which will show one brand of religion to be true over and against the others.

The pluralist will resist this. It is the first task of the philosopher surveying religious diversity to make a considered estimate of the limits of human reason. It may be perfectly respectable for the philosopher to conclude that reason does not extend so far as to proving one strand in religion to be true over and against the others.

A considered estimate of this kind can rest on a number of considerations. First, it is possible to perform an induction on the results of interreligious apologetics down the centuries and across many cultures. Whether we survey debates between the Indian philosophical-cum-religious traditions or reflect, as above, on the arguments between the Abrahamic faiths, we find the fruitlessness of attempts to establish conclusions about the cognitive superiority of one religion over others on the basis of publicly agreed criteria. Second, we can note that the disagreements between different brands of religion are in some areas particularly resistant to anything like proof and disproof. Many of the disagreements are on matters of history, matters indeed of ancient history when judged from our standpoint. In the nature of the case, we are not going to find evidence which we can use now to settle what took place thousands of years ago. Many of the disagreements are on metaphysical matters. It is hard, to say the least, to prove or disprove metaphysical assertions. What seems metaphysically plausible to us is liable to depend on our prior metaphysical commitments.

By way of illustrating the final point above, consider Yandell's disproof of the metaphysics of the Indian monist religious system Advaita Vedanta. The Advaitins claim that the ultimate religious reality is an impersonal and absolutely simple substance – Nirguna Brahman. As absolutely simple, Brahman is without qualities. Yandell writes:

It looks as if Advaita wants to hold all of a set of logically inconsistent theses. In particular, it begins with the claim that something exists but altogether lacks properties, and that something that altogether lacks properties can be identical to a variety of things that have properties and are distinct from one another . . . if we have no idea what properties Brahman has, and can form no concept of them, how could we possibly know that Brahman is qualityless or with what Brahman was or was not identical?

Ramanuja, for example, held that it was contradictory to hold that There is an X such that for any property P, X lacks P . . . Thus to claim that Brahman, or anything else, is qualityless is to claim that it exists and deny an entailment of that very claim. Hence Advaita Vedanta metaphysics is not even possibly true. Ramanuja's critique seems decisive, and there is no point lingering over logical impossibilities.¹³

13 Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 242.

The Advaitin system entails a contradiction only *on the assumption that all that is must have qualities*. It is therefore only expressive of logical falsehood if that assumption is necessarily true. Yandell gives no argument in the passage to show that the assumption is necessarily true. The assumption is in fact a substantive metaphysical principle which many, many thinkers, East and West, have denied. There is a strand of Western metaphysical reflection which holds that for the compounded, contingent things of the empirical world to exist, they must depend on a metaphysical substratum which is absolutely simple and therefore without properties. Thus things with qualities are only derived, contingent things; they are real only because something exists which is without properties. This line of reflection goes back at least to Plotinus and can be found in *theistic* thinkers such as Maimonides and Aquinas. There are defenses of it in contemporary English-speaking philosophy from the likes of Kretzmann and Miller.¹⁴ For this tradition of thought the postulation of a qualityless metaphysical/religious ultimate, far from being the expression of the logically impossible, has to be true for us to make final sense of the world. The natural theological arguments hinted at in Plotinus and explored by the likes of Aquinas indicate, for those persuaded by them, that something defined negatively and relationally as the absolutely simple thing on which all things depend can be introduced into religious discourse in a meaningful way. Such systems can give a sense in which this qualityless thing is nonetheless identical with all things: it is Being, or the power of being, and thus present in all things at each and every moment of their existence.

One person's metaphysical profundities are notoriously another person's examples of pretentious nonsense. The pluralist has a well-founded skepticism about the degree to which we can sort out rival metaphysico-religious systems on the score of the obvious coherence of one and the obvious incoherence of another. What the pluralist can note is that many of the so-called higher religions in human history have been united in a quest to seek out an ultimate reality, a reality which is presumed to be ultimate ontologically (it is the ground of all being), ultimate rationally (it provides the reason why all things are what they are), and ultimate evaluatively (it is the norm and source of all value).¹⁵ In the nature of the case, anything which serves this role will be radically unlike ordinary, contingent things. It will be radically transcendent. It may be picked out negatively and relationally, as, for example, Aquinas did when he wrote that the prime intent of those who use the word "God" is to pick out that whatever it is that is above all things (that is, of transcending value), is the source of all things (that is, sustains all things continually in their being and properties), and is removed from all things [that is, is utterly unlike the things it sustains in its nature or mode of being].¹⁶ This prime intent then leads to the postulation of something

14 See L. P. Gerson's account of Plotinus in *Plotinus* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 12–22; and N. Kretzmann's account of Aquinas in *The Metaphysics of Theism: Aquinas' Natural Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), ch. 4; B. Miller, *A Most Unlikely God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), ch. 8.

15 See D. Pailin, *The Anthropological Character of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 9.

16 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia, 13, 8 ad 2; translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster: Christian Classics, 1981).

which is radically unknowable so far as its positive characterization is concerned, a point echoed in a number of religious traditions.¹⁷

I have tried to show how the agnosticism about the detailed dogmatics of brands of religion on which pluralism depends has some warrant. But pluralism is also characterized by its realist commitment. It wants to have its skeptical cake and eat it too. It is clear enough in a very broad way how it is going to attempt this: behind the many, apparently irresolvable disagreements between the religions are areas of overlap and commonality. These are significant enough and sufficiently supported by areas of human experience to support the claim that human religions are humanly rooted responses to a transcendent reality defined negatively and relationally in the manner introduced above.

Unfortunately, space allows me only the briefest sketch of how this generic religious apologetic might go. It can appeal to the broad thrust of religious experience. Many human beings at many times and places record encounters with God or some sacred, transcendent reality. The power of these experiential reports to warrant the metaphysical claims of particular brands of religion is weakened by the fact that different and incompatible claims are made on the basis of them. However, they can be presented, at a higher level of reflection and generality, to support some generic, syncretistic claims. Readers are directed to the studies by Franks Davis and Gellman to see how this may be accomplished.¹⁸ The pluralist in effect tries to use the many facets of religious experience as grounds for thinking that an anthropological interpretation and explanation of human religious life is not sufficient.

Another area from which a global, positive religious apologetic can draw sustenance is the moral and spiritual fruits of the great religious traditions. This is a prominent theme in the writings of John Hick.¹⁹ The Hick claim is that many religious traditions are alike in being morally and spiritually fruitful, and that their moral and spiritual fruits are very similar. These facts give grounds for supposing that the various strands of religion are in touch with an ultimate reality described negatively and relationally, as above. It is easy to sneer at this argument, as when it is said that it transforms the word "true" when used of religious traditions into "effective in producing nice people."²⁰ But this is too easy. What the pluralist means by "true" can be old-fashioned correspondence truth. The pluralist takes some generic religious claim introducing the postulate of a religious ultimate, defined negatively and relationally, to be true. One ground of this alleged truth, and therefore against a naturalistic interpretation of religion, is the moral and spiritual fruits of the manifold strands of religion. The grounds are pragmatic insofar as they cite a facet of human praxis. But there is then an argument to a truth: certain fruits of religion are best explained by invoking contact with a moral and spiritual reality which transcends human powers. Religious truth is not converted into "what works."

17 A point explored by D. Burrell, *Knowing the Unknowable God* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1986).

18 See C. Franks Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), and J. Gellman, *Experience of God and the Rationality of Theistic Belief* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

19 See Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*, chs 19 and 20.

20 Yandell, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 68.