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## A TELEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF JOHN HICK'S THREEFOLD TYPOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

This research critically investigates the soteriological ground of John Hick's religious typology and his understanding of Religious Pluralism. It begins by considering the criticisms of Gavin D'Costa who, in his early work, favored Hick's typology in *Theology and Religious Pluralism*, but later became critical of it in his work, *Impossibility of a Pluralist view of Religions*. It will also consider Paul Knitter's alternative fourfold typology introduced in his work, *Introducing Theologies of Religions*, and Mark Heim's ideas concerning religious pluralism in his work *Salvation*. Finally, the paper will investigate Zen Buddhism's view of a "positionless position" as a "non-common denominator" from Masao Abe's *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue* to see if Hick's idea of ultimate reality is viable basis to defend religious pluralism. After demonstrating these critiques of Hick's main soteriological grounds of this threefold typology, the research defends a new framework of threefold typology, not built on soteriological grounds, but on teleological grounds, in order to fulfill Hick's own wishes for promoting peace both spiritually and socially. This is a new framework which can embrace the beliefs of not only pluralists, but also exclusivists and inclusivists, and those who comprise the majority of Christians in the world today.

**Keywords:** Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Religious Pluralism, Ultimate Reality.

## **Introduction**

As Masao Abe points out, Europe previously had enjoyed a religious monopoly of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> However, with globalization there followed by an influx of immigrants from different faiths. With this influx, Christian theologians and ministers of both Europe and North America needed to reconsider their theology and philosophy of religion to minimize conflicts and to promote peaceful co-existence. This trend has been a continuous process since the beginning of WWII. In 1941, One of the leading writers connected to this change is John Hick. With the outbreak of World War II, Hick was very much against violence and he refused to take part in war. Instead, he joined the Friends' (i.e. Quakers') Ambulance Unit and served in several hospitals.<sup>2</sup> Hick was then considered a Christian evangelist; he previously experienced a conversion during the age of eighteen when studying law degree at University College, Hull.<sup>3</sup> His first published article in *Scottish Journal of Theology* in 1958<sup>4</sup> criticized D.M. Baillie's understanding of Christology as departing from the Chalcedonian orthodoxy in a "paradox of grace." This demonstrated his earlier conservatism, which is in contrast to the more radical understanding of Christology and rejection of Chalcedonian orthodoxy in his later works. His conservative and exclusivist views evolved into a more pluralistic view after obtaining the position in the Theology Department of the University of Birmingham in 1967. He witnessed the changes of that industrial city, with the influx of immigrants from the Caribbean islands and Indian subcontinent. This created larger communities of non-Christians: Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Hindus along with the long-established Jewish community. He also witnessed the emergence of the neo-Nazi National Front, generating prejudice and hatred and promoting violence against these communities.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, his fifteen years in Birmingham<sup>6</sup> and his involvement in community development shaped him as a Religious Pluralist until his death in 2012. Hick was not only involved in various community relations' organization, but he was also one of the founders and the first chair of the activist AFFOR (All Faiths for One Race) and encountered opportunities to visit the temples, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship.<sup>7</sup>

Although Alan Race firstly introduced a tri-polar classification of Christian theology of religions in 1983, Hick elaborated his idea of Religious Pluralism by contrasting it to the other categories of Exclusivism and Inclusivism in an effort to solve the problem of conflicting truth-claims among different religions and to find a common ground among different religions. This classification has come under criticism because of its contradictions and the failure to solve conflicting religious truth claims. The purpose of this paper will show that these problems with Hick's typology can be traced to its soteriological ground. It will further go on to suggest that Hick's typology still has value if it is reconsidered from a teleological ground.

### **Tri-Polar Typology on Soteriological Grounds**

When Hick explains the tri-polar typology, he usually describes Exclusivism and Inclusivism before presenting his Religious Pluralism; thus, previous two serve as thesis and antithesis for Hick's Religious Pluralism as synthesis. For this reason, D'Costa believes the typology functions only for a heuristic purpose and positions Religious Pluralism as the only true option.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, we should examine if this threefold typology can still be useful heuristic purpose or not. Firstly, however, we need to explain Hick's position carefully. D'Costa explains the threefold typology in short as follows.

Although there are, without a doubt, considerable differences between theologians belonging to the same 'camp' and many features of overlaps between different approaches, it can be in general briefly summarized.

Exclusivism asserts that only those who hear the gospel proclaimed and explicitly confess Christ are saved. Inclusivism claims that Christ is the normative revelation of God, although salvation is possible outside of the explicit Christian church, but this salvation is always from Christ. Pluralism insists that all religions are equal and valid paths to the one divine reality and Christ is one revelation among many equally important revelations.<sup>9</sup>

Alan Race originally created the threefold typology, but John Hick developed this idea in his books to promote his version of Religious Pluralism. For Hick, Exclusivism is out of question since traditional dogma, ‘no salvation outside of church (*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*<sup>10</sup>)’ as previously taught in the Catholic tradition was already superseded by the Second Vatican Council in 1960’s.<sup>11</sup> According to him, Exclusivists, who believe the supremacy of Christian God and deem other religions and their followers as false is no longer acceptable. Nevertheless, it is significant that before the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic church had been taking this ‘no salvation outside of church’ stance for more than a millennium. In addition, as of today, many Protestant churches are holding this position as well. The Pentecostal church is a good example in modern secular countries as the sociologist Peter Berger pointed out.<sup>12</sup> Berger initially, predicted that the more secularization progresses, the less the number of religious members will be. However, to his surprise, he found out the fact that the members of religious organizations did not diminished and that the numbers of the Pentecostal followers grew much faster pace than that of the conventional Protestant churches.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the number of church members in traditional Churches in western countries drastically decreased while the numbers of unaffiliated people increased as a result. In England, regular church attendance rate diminished from 50 percent in 1851 to nine percent in 1997.<sup>14</sup> Thus, before debating this issue philosophically, it is worth noticing this trend in mind as a background knowledge. The phenomena in modern secular societies after WWII in many western countries, are the movements toward polarization, either

an influx toward more Exclusivism types of group in Christian churches or a departure from conventional churches to become unaffiliated, be it agnostic or atheist.

Inclusivists hold the view that salvation is possible for non-Christians and is open for those who have not yet encountered Christ or have not yet believed in Christ. However, salvation always must come from and through Christ. As Karl Rahner describes, other religious followers are ‘anonymous Christians.’ Paul Knitter explains Rahner’s view as follows:

If grace, or God’s loving presence, is part of our very natures (step1), and if this grace must always be embodied (step2), Rahner adds another essential Christian belief (step3) to his theology of religions that assures that this is a Christian theology; all grace is Christ’s grace. With this final step in his case for God’s presence in the broader religious world, Rahner provides both further depth but also new limits... From his understanding of Jesus as the reason why God pours out divine love over all creation in the first place, Rahner drew a further conclusion: therefore, any Buddhist or Hindu or Aboriginal Australian who experiences the grace of God’s love in their religion is already connected with and oriented toward Jesus, because Jesus represents the ultimate goal of God’s gift of love and grace. Further since the continuing presence and power of Jesus are found in the community that carries on his message through history, those people who are “graced” in and through their own religions are also oriented toward the Christian church. They are, in a sense, already Christians and experience what Christians experience and are directed toward what Christians have in Jesus. But they don’t realize it yet. They’re Christians without the name of Christian. They are anonymous Christians.<sup>15</sup>

Rahner believed that other religious followers who experience the grace of love are connected to Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Hick

is dissatisfied with this idea since Inclusivism still hold the view of supremacy of one's own belief and religion over others.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the grace of Christian religion is only unilateral and not bilateral; Hick considers it as a problematic issue since sincere dialogue requires a willingness to understand each other without considering other religions as inferior. Most Inclusivists do not consider how they would feel if religious scholars from other faiths applied the same Inclusivism logic by claiming that all Christians are 'anonymous Muslims,' 'anonymous Buddhists,' or 'anonymous Hinduists,' therefore, there is salvation for Christians but not through Christ. This idea is not easy to accept for Christian Inclusivists.

Does not the Inclusivist believe that all claims to be the one and only true religions are false except for his own Christian claim. Inter-religious dialogue, Catholic Inclusivists believe although they are too polite to say so face to face that they alone have the final and absolute truth, whilst their dialogue partners have only lesser elements of truth.<sup>17</sup>

Hick is aware that the majority of Christians remain within the intellectual horizon of either exclusivism or inclusivism.<sup>18</sup> Against this, Hick then explains his Religious Pluralism.

[R]eligious pluralism is a view that there is no one-and-only true and salvific faith. Subject to the 'fruits' criterion, which rules out violent fanatical sects (including those within the world religions themselves), pluralism regards all the 'great world faiths' as equally authentic and salvific. In the poetic words of the Persian Sufi, Rumi, 'The lamps are different, but the Light is the same; it comes from Beyond.'<sup>19</sup>

The sentence, "the lamps and the Light" is of course a metaphor; lamps signify different religions while the Light reaches everywhere and everyone in the world. Light is a kind of Ultimate Truth. The number of lamps can be plural, however, the Light which provides the lamps'

purpose is essentially the same. This metaphor also points to an underlying soteriological ground to recognize the Light which is the true destination of all the various lamps.

It is important to realize that when Hick mentions the threefold typology on soteriological grounds, the conflicting problem of truth-claims is always set in motion; Hick states that “that in fact the truth-claims and the salvation-claim cohere closely together and should be treated as a single package.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Hick’s Religious Pluralism in Depth**

Moving beyond the metaphors concerning light, Hick’s Religious Pluralism employs Kantian Epistemology as a framework to present Ultimate Reality. This Ultimate Reality is a noumenal reality, thing as it is in itself or *Ding an sich*<sup>21</sup> in German. According to Kant, when observing a thing existing as it is in itself, human beings comprehend only through sense perceptions of the object which are limited to capture all the information from the *Ding an sich*.

Hick thinks this noumenal reality can be applicable to the noumenal deity which is coined as Ultimate Reality. Phenomenal realities are deities to which human beings respond in various forms based on the regional human’s traditions and other factors, however it is also possible to think that we are in fact all responding to the same noumenal reality, which is ineffable. Hick exhibits the same concepts from different religious traditions to show that his idea of Religious Pluralism is not so new and unique concept. The examples are the distinction between nirguna Brahman and Ishvara from Hinduism, parallel distinction between the Godhead (*Deitas*) and God (*Deus*) from Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, Jewish Kabbalist mystic variation between En Soph, the absolute divine reality beyond all human description and the God of the Bible, and Muslim Sufis, Al Haqq’s ‘the Real,’ seemingly similar concept to En Soph and the self-revealing Allah.<sup>22</sup> He also points out the modern scholars share the similar views such as that Paul Tillich’s description of ‘the God above the God of theism’<sup>23</sup> and that Gordon Kaufman’s contrast of ‘real God’

and ‘available God.’<sup>24 25</sup>

Although there are many so-called personal God, gods, or non-personal gods, or non-theistic divinities, they are all one step before Ultimate Reality, and all the worships to different God, gods, non-theistic divinities can be thought as responses to the same Ultimate Reality, “a single divine noumenon and many diverse divine phenomena.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, it is logically plausible to acknowledge the particularities, such as religious teaching, language, ceremonial clothing, chanting among different religions as different forms to the same noumenal reality, which is beyond human descriptions and comprehensions. This is Hick’s Religious Pluralism hypothesis. Hick seems to find the common ground to resolve the issue of conflicting truth-claims for religions. In the last paragraph of chapter nine in *Philosophy of Religion*, he ends as follows: “Thus it is possible, and indeed an attractive, hypothesis – as an alternative to total skepticism – that the great religious traditions of the world represent different human perceptions of and response to the same infinitive divine Reality.”<sup>27</sup> For Hick, this noumenal reality is a synonym to a common denominator that exists beyond worldly phenomenological religions; thus, it has to be the only one common denominator which is indescribable and unexplainable.

### **A Critical Analysis of Hick’s Tri-Polar Typology**

D’Costa contests Hick’s explanation of Religious Pluralism as another form of Exclusivism. He points out that Hick holds the view that the ‘*solus Christus*’ assumption held by exclusivists is incompatible with the Christian teaching of God who desires to save all people. According to D’Costa, Hick also insisted that it was God, and not Christianity or Christ, toward whom all religions move, and from whom they gain their salvific efficacy and he therefore proposed a theocentric revolution away from a Christ-centric or ecclesia-centric position that has dominated Christian history.<sup>28</sup> Hick argued that the doctrine of second persona, the Son of God, should be understood mythically. He stressed the doctrine of an all-loving God over that of the *solus Christus* principle and more or

less rejected the second persona of Trinity with the references to recent renowned New Testament scholars' conclusions; this dogma that Jesus is the Son of God was created in 325 at Council of Nicaea by the Roman Emperor Constantine I, and this dogma created prevalent understanding among Christians that Jesus possess both human and God elements, solidified in 451 at Council of Chalcedon convened by Emperor Marcian and so forth. In simple terms, D'Costa criticized Hick's reductionism of Christianity.<sup>29</sup> D'Costa, as a Catholic theologian, cannot tolerate Hick's radical shift from Christ-centric to a theocentric position.

The different religious responses to the same Ultimate Reality are seen as both theistic and non-theistic. D'Costa contests that Hick tries to overcome theistic essentialism. This argument allows Christians to view the history of religions as a history of Ultimate Reality's dynamic movement without making any special claims for Christianity. According to D'Costa, Hick's Christian attitude to other religions need not be characterized by a desire to convert, or claims to superiority, but a will to learn and grow together toward the truth; the mission should be jointly carried out to the secular world by the religions, rather than towards each other. Hick suggests that Exclusivism and Inclusivism cannot provide such fruitful conditions for interreligious dialogues. D'Costa certainly has an enormous doubt about the threefold typology. Before criticizing the typology, D'Costa admits that he had changed his views of it. "My own position has changed over the years. Once a convinced Rahnerian, I now find myself both troubled by the threefold paradigm and theological construal of the problem."<sup>30</sup>

The typology is constantly inadequate. Furthermore, typologies easily harden into Procrustean<sup>31</sup> be, forcing diverse materials into uncomfortably controlled locations. I think it is the case that in using the depictions (pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism) we disguise the fact that what we are really dealing with are different forms of exclusivism... Pluralism often claims the high ground in being more tolerant, more liberal, more affirmative of truth

in other religions, etc. The threefold typology rhetorically reaffirms this false self-description. Pluralism, as I argue elsewhere, has its own intolerant, illiberal, exclusivist logic. It is a form of secular agnosticism, reducing all religion to private confession, controlling the public sphere with its own implicitly ideology. In this sense, Hick's pluralism is an exclusivist secular agnosticism, ruling out of court all truth-claims other than his own, allowing for the truth of only one "religion," his own mythological modernity. Pluralism must operate with criteria to discern "truth," "God," and "salvation." And in so doing, it will naturally exclude all that is not in keeping with these criteria. Hence, in this respect, it is no different from exclusivism.<sup>32</sup>

D'Costa revealed his first critical article called "The Impossibility of a Pluralistic View of Religions" in *Religious Studies* Vol. 32 June 1996 and Hick responded the same journal Vol. 33 in June 1997 by the name of "The Possibility of Religious Pluralism; A Reply to D'Costa." Hick rejected D'Costa's claim that his Religious Pluralism was another form of Exclusivism merely because it employed criteria and considered anything that fell out of that criteria was wrong. He admitted that he did employ criteria; but disagreed with D'Costa's claim that all use of criteria constituted a form of Exclusivism was misleading<sup>33</sup> and stressed that "Exclusivism and Religious Pluralism are of different logical kinds, the one being a self-committing affirmation of faith and the other a philosophical hypothesis."<sup>34</sup>

But if as Hick admitted there is a difference between religious affirmation and religious hypothesis, then is it also possible to consider that the typology itself be set on different grounds other than soteriological one? This is the challenge of this paper. Since the typology is deeply connected to the truth-claims and the condition of life after death, this typology could not separate from salvific grounds, but if Exclusivism and Religious Pluralism are on different grounds, this typology might be justified. D'Costa's recognizes some of the limitations of the soteriological approach.

Hick's philosophical approach to religious pluralism could be contrasted with the very pragmatic approach taken by those deeply influenced by liberation theology, such as Paul Knitter or the Asian Roman Catholic theologian Aloysius Pieris. Pieris emphasizes the overcoming of the theocentric, Christocentric, and ecclesiocentric problems that bedevil this debate by emphasizing the liberative sociopolitical power of religion as the only criterion for authenticity. For example, he finds that Buddhist monasticism and its commitment to the cessation of suffering through gnosis allows "an engagement in a positive and practical program of psychic-social restructuring of human existence here on earth in accordance with the path leading to nirvanic freedom."<sup>35</sup>

There are some who claim a fourth option such as Paul Knitter. Knitter explores more neutral categories.<sup>36</sup> Instead of 'Exclusivism,' 'Inclusivism,' 'Religious Pluralism,' he uses 'The Replacement Model,' 'The Fulfillment Model,' and 'The Mutuality Model'. This allows him to not categorize the first two as critically as Hick. He then proposes a fourth option, 'The Acceptance Model,' which does not require a common denominator uniting the different religions; what Hick called Ultimate Reality. But regardless of his reaction to Hick, Knitter remains a monistic pluralist. He uses the famous metaphor of finger is pointing to the moon in *Without Buddha, I could not become a Christian*.<sup>37</sup> He believes that Buddhism and Christianity are pointing to the same Ultimate Reality.

Mark Heim suggests that each religion should be acknowledged in its difference; unlike the pluralism of Hick, the pluralism of Heim is that there are many paths leading to diverse equally valid destinations. He writes, "Nirvana and communion with God are contradictory only if we assume that one or the other must be the sole fate for all human beings."<sup>38</sup> Thus, Heim criticizes Hick's pluralism as not diverse enough. In other words, Heim's pluralistic view is not a monistic pluralism, but a kind of pluralistic pluralism. It is for this reason that Heim calls himself

a ‘convinced Inclusivist’ who advocates ‘independent validity of other ways.’<sup>39</sup>

There are two more scholars who are dissatisfied with Hick’s approach. They are Kenneth Surin and John Milbank. D’Costa thinks both are primarily dissatisfied with threefold typology itself. Both see Hick as ignoring more important dimensions which underlie religious pluralism.

Surin’s criticism is essentially political and genealogical (deriving from Michel Foucault), suggesting that rather than serve up theologies about religious unity in an abstract, ahistorical, and apolitical fashion, real attention should be paid to the social, political, and power relationships between religions in their particular locality. Theological talk has usually served to obscure rather than identify the real terrain in which the exercise of power in the materialist order operates. Such materialist hermeneutics are the key to understanding the generation of various legitimating theologies – and pluralist theologies legitimate late modernity and capitalism. While Surin’s criticisms are powerful and incisive, there is a danger that theology is reductively encoded by Surin’s materialism.<sup>40</sup>

His account of Milbank is similar but focused on praxis.

Milbank, while sharing much in common with Surin, proposes quite a different role for theology. Milbank is deeply suspicious of the notion of “religion,” as well as the belief that dialogue provides a privileged access to truth. Rather, he urges that Christianity must simply proclaim its vision through its particular form of practice within the church. The church can do no other than this, nor ought it to try. What both Surin and Milbank do so clearly is alert us to the fact that all theology is a political and social practice. Milbank advances the case, in claiming a heavenly practice for Christians, a practice with a difference.<sup>41</sup>

Departing for a moment from D'Costa's view, it is beneficial to introduce a criticism of this typology from a non-Christian scholar, the Buddhist scholar Masao Abe. He argues for his 'positionless position' by claiming that there are two types of pluralists; those who admit the commonality of religions and those who deny it (as mentioned in the fourth option). The former includes Hick, while the latter suggests Heim and John Cobb Jr. Abe first illustrates the Exclusionist's view of rejecting a common denominator such as that of Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth.<sup>42</sup> Abe proposed another option; neither rejecting a common denominator nor accepting it. It is neither monistic pluralism nor pluralistic pluralism. He introduces 'no-common-denominator' in the absolute sense which becomes a 'positionless position.'<sup>43</sup> In other words, from his perspective, Exclusionism, Inclusivism and Religious Pluralism no longer exists, by realizing the religious point referred to as 'zero,' the position of having an assumption of both that 'the commonality exists' or that 'the commonality does not exist' also vanishes; religious belief becomes a 'positionless position.' This idea undoubtedly stems from his Zen Buddhism and its emphasis on 'non-self.' However, precisely because of this, Abe argues that Hick cannot establish the idea of Ultimate Reality and simply place the non-theistic 'Reality' of Buddhism into this category of Ultimate Reality. After all, for Abe, even if Hick made such efforts to reduce the bar of Christ-centric theology to more pluralistic theocentric theology, Hick still holds a monistic point of view, that human beings are worshipping or responding toward an indescribable Ultimate Reality, which is still the one and only noumenal reality.

### **Threefold Typology on Soteriological Grounds**

According to D'Costa, Inclusivism has a similar logic to Religious Pluralism. For instance, Rahner was happy to acknowledge God's grace operative outside the visible boundaries of the church. However, concerning the final destiny of men and women, Rahner could not depart from the necessity of the beatific vision, the Trinitarian glory of God.<sup>44</sup> Thus there is only a twofold typology according to D'Costa, or two forms

of Exclusivism, one which is inclusive, and one which is pluralistic. That is to say, either that salvation exists only with Christ or that salvation exists without Christ. D'Costa detested Hick's dismissal of Inclusivism and his view as a mere antithesis for a synthetic proposition of his Religious Pluralism. Nevertheless, this is a somewhat unfair criticism of Hick and ignores Hick's defense.<sup>45</sup> For Hick, an Exclusivist refers to those who proclaim that salvation is achieved only by believing in Christ.

Hick's threefold typology has attracted much criticism, and yet the alternative typologies such as twofold and fourfold typology also have their problems. In the field of Christology, it is certainly difficult to reach agreement. Perry Schmidt-Leukel presents an insightful reaffirmation of Hick's threefold typology by responding to six different categories of criticism to defend Hick's tri-polar typology; however, Schmidt-Leukel's idea still falters on the soteriological grounds.<sup>46</sup> And this is a part of the problem, as long as the typology operates upon salvific grounds, defenses and criticisms of Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Religious Pluralism lead nowhere since there is little ability to compromise or alter their own religious affirmations.

We return to the same impasse as Hume. Conflicting truth-claims of religions cannot be solved since religion has its roots in particularity of belief. Evaluating religious belief through the typology of Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Religious Pluralism leads to particularities that cannot be reconciled. This is fundamentally because this typology rests on soteriological grounds; whether salvation occurs only through Christ. This is why this typology has been so criticized and rejected. But the question is whether we can rescue Hick's typology by shifting it away from its soteriological basis to a teleological one?

### **Considering Hick's Typology on Teleological Grounds**

We can thus propose the threefold typology with an emphasis on teleological grounds instead of soteriological grounds. In other word, we can give emphasis on what our faith leads us to become. As Hick himself argues, the way we evaluate the validity and truth of our religion(s), should

depend on the *fruit* of our spirituality which includes our morality.<sup>47</sup> Thus, the criterion of religious validity should be judged by the behavior of religious believers. What we believe in is less important than how we act, although what we believe and how we act are connected. The authenticity of a religion cannot be measured on soteriological grounds but may be more accurately seen as a teleological problem. We need to reconsider the intentions of Hick for proposing his Religious Pluralism. That is to say that it aimed to overcome Hume's skepticism about religions and to foster peaceful co-existence with people from different faiths. It is based on real living interaction. In this way, we can also see Exclusivists not as dangerous fundamentalists or even cults of which he gives many examples. We can see them based on how they act.

Suppose that there are two Exclusivist missionaries sent to the developing countries where the poverty level is severe, from some traditional churches and not from cult groups. Both of the missionaries firmly believed that without confessing Christ as our one and only savior, there is no salvation. One Exclusivist missionary preaches about St. John's gospel such as "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me,'" (John 14:6)<sup>48</sup> "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father,'" (John 14:9) and "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30) This missionary's interest was only to convert the local people, and if they did not accept Christianity, the missionary threatens them with damnation. On the other hand, we can consider the Exclusivist missionary who truly follows Jesus's words from Matthew, "Truly I tell you, whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, that you do unto me" (Matt. 24:40). This missionary's interest is to serve others, especially the poorest people on earth. For such a person, Hick might probably agree that the fruit of Exclusivist missionary work is real or he would call the missionary a 'saint,' even though the missionary is essentially an Exclusivist. From teleological grounds, we can appreciate how people are transformed and grow spiritually by believing and encountering the divine nature. Hick's

typology runs into problems when seen from soteriological grounds, but by seeing it from teleological grounds, we can discover many ‘saints’ among ‘Exclusivists,’ and ‘Inclusivists.’

The departure from salvific grounds makes it possible to create acceptable categories in all categories. Exclusivists, Inclusivists, and Religious Pluralists all have bad and good, the inauthentic and the authentic. Exclusivists who practice good moral deeds should be accepted and praised, while extreme fundamentalists groups which promote violence against those of different faiths should be condemned. Hick quoted the criterion of the authenticity of faiths from Bible.<sup>49</sup> Hick said, “what St. Paul called the fruit of the spirit, which he described as ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control’ (Gal. 5:22) to which we must, I think, add a commitment to social justice as an expression of love.”<sup>50</sup> Authentic faith is directly linked to the manifestation of their belief and attitude towards day to day life and neighbors. Each believer’s essence becomes actuality. If the essence of faith is ‘real,’ then its manifestation is also ‘real,’ which differs from mere moral grounds. Each individual’s action in everyday life through the relationship with the divine should be considered carefully in this typology.

If we are to be transformed from self-centric, ego-centric to divinity-centric and act morally and with a compassionate attitude towards others, the faith must be good and true in terms of the criterion of Hick, which is applicable to all great world religions, not merely among Christians. Hick also acknowledged in his article that there are good and evil in all world religions. Thus, the declaring position of Religious Pluralist on soteriological grounds alone is not sufficient even from Hick’s point of view, all in which there are no easy dwelling places to affirm oneself as righteous without fruitful actions and attitudes.

Even more, Christians can move amongst those three categories without discriminating others or feeling superiority to others of different faiths. Another thought experiment would be that a Christian nurse who is an Exclusivist encountering patients from different faiths, and treating them with compassion, not just because it is his or her job but because it

is his or her belief and mission. On soteriological grounds, one can fall into contradiction if one looks only at the beliefs, while on teleological grounds, these salvific elements are not a necessary condition to be an authentic spiritual being. Most people can in fact be both Pluralist and Exclusionist without being self-contradictory just as Abe's 'positionless position.' Unlike scholars who often adhere firmly to their position and rigorously debate these polemical issues, most people can grow their spirituality out of multiple stances. Even among scholars, D'Costa has changed his position over the time; Hick himself was once Exclusionist too; Heim, who criticized Hick as not pluralistic enough, is a convinced Inclusionist.

Hick disliked the term 'superiority,' and detests the attitude among religious believers. He was especially critical about Christian scholars who hold 'superior' view of their religion when having interfaith dialogues. Hick did not make a clear distinction between 'superiority' on worship level and practical level. But many ordinary Christians may consider their God 'superiority' without consciously feeling 'superior' to people of different faiths or considering other religions as 'inferior' to Christianity. A sense of 'superiority' in faith is not the same as 'superiority' in the way we treat others. The golden rule in all world religions is to treat others as you wish to be treated or do not do things to others that you do not like to receive. As a result, the sense of 'superiority' of theocentric or Ultimate Reality consciousness manifests as a fruitful actuality out of their authentic spirituality. Thus, there are two different paradigms; where people can freely proclaim the sense of superiority to divine natures as religious responses and regain their dynamism to transform through and in their faith to the divine, but people should not proclaim themselves as such to others who believe in different divinities. In another paradigm, people can treat others from different faiths equally in multi-cultural communities without falling into self-contradiction and this attitude can be manifested through the response to the divine nature as a source of energy for spiritual growth, this dynamism should always serve for awaking people in order to act the criterion of 'fruit' and golden rules.

## Conclusion

To defend Hick's threefold typology on soteriological grounds is problematic. Hick presented his typology in ways which dismissed Exclusivism and Inclusivism as inferior and saw Religious Pluralism as the most advanced solution. However, in the real world, most people do not seem to want to abandon traditional religious dogmas so easily. But while we run into problems when we try to defend Hick's typology on soteriological grounds, we can still find value in his work if we see it from teleological grounds. We need not only make distinctions based on belief but see it in terms of action. Thus, it makes more sense to look at Hick who was interested in seeing human individual's transformation in a global society as well as within local multi-ethnic communities. However, looking at Hick's threefold typology from its transforming, self-developing and self-evolving angles, the threefold typology could be beneficial to lead Christians and those of other faiths to be more egalitarian, ethical, loving and compassionate. As mentioned earlier, this reading from teleological grounds is not lacking in Hick's writing. He often stresses in his writing teleological growth. Towards the end of a public talk, Hick ended as follows.

So the bottom line, I am suggesting, is this: we should live whole heartedly within our own faith, so long as we find it to be sustaining and a sphere of spiritual growth, but we should freely recognize the equal validity of the other great world faiths for their adherents, and we can also be enriched by some of their insights and spiritual practices.<sup>51</sup>

Can these Christians, Hick encourages to transform, live and act within their own faith, but also be regarded as admirable figures by other religious practitioners or even secular people? If so, then the threefold typology on teleological grounds remains valuable device for understanding religion.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>2</sup> Hick, John et al. *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*. Revised ed. edition. Michigan: Zondervan, 1996, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>4</sup> Hick, John. “The Christology of B.M. Baille,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*. Vol, 11, 1958, 1-12.

<sup>5</sup> Hick, John et al., 37.

<sup>6</sup> From 1967 until 1982. Cf. Hick, John. *John Hick: An Autobiography*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Hick, John et al., 38.

<sup>8</sup> D’Costa, Gavin. “The Impossibility of a Pluralist View of Religions.” *Religious Studies* Vol. 32, no. 2. 1996, 223–32, 226.

<sup>9</sup> D’Costa, Gavin. “Theology of Religions.” Edited by David F. Ford. *The Modern Theologians*. Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005, 628.

<sup>10</sup> Citation from CATHOLICISM.ORG. A Saint Cyprian (died A.D. 258): “He who has turned his back on the Church of Christ shall not come to the rewards of Christ; he is an alien, a worldling, an enemy. You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother. Our Lord warns us when He says: ‘he that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.’ Whosoever breaks the peace and harmony of Christ acts against Christ; whoever gathers elsewhere than in the Church scatters the Church of Christ.” (*Unity of the Catholic Church*) Cf. <http://catholicism.org/eens-fathers.html>

<sup>11</sup> Hick, John. *The New Frontier of Religion and Science - Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 151.

<sup>12</sup> Berger, Peter. *The Many Altars of Modernity: Toward a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*. Boston: De Gruyter, 2014, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Berger, Peter, Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas. *Religious America, Secular Europe?: A Theme and Variations*. 1st edition. Hampshire: Routledge, 2008, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Brierley, Peter. *The Tide Is Running Out: What the English Church Attendance Survey Reveals*. London: Christian Research, 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Knitter, Paul. *Introducing Theologies of Religions*. New York: Orbis Books, 2002, 72-3.

<sup>16</sup> Hick, John. 2006, 152.

<sup>17</sup> Hick, John. *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion*. 2010 edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 168.

<sup>18</sup> Hick, John. 2006, 153.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Hick, John. *Problem of Religious Pluralism*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1985, 46.

<sup>21</sup> *Das Ding* is a neutral singular noun, while *die Dinge* is a plural noun. *Das Ding an sich* is translated to a thing in itself, while *die Dinge an sich*, things in themselves.

<sup>22</sup> Hick, John. *Philosophy of Religion*. 4th edition. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1990, 117.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Tillich. P. *The Courage to Be*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952, 190.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Kaufman. G. *God the Problem*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Hick, John. 1990, 117.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>28</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 2005, 628.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 637.

<sup>31</sup> Greek mythology in which Procrustes killed people by cutting or expanding their body which is either too short or tall for the size of bed which was in fact changeable, so anybody could be dead.

<sup>32</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 2005, 638.

<sup>33</sup> Hick, John. "The Possibility of Religious Pluralism: A Reply to Gavin D'Costa," *Religious Studies* Vol. 33, no. 2. 1997, 162.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>35</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 2005, 629.

<sup>36</sup> Knitter, Paul. 2002, 240-2.

<sup>37</sup> Knitter, Paul. 2013, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Heim, Mark. 1995, 149.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>40</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 2005, 637.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Masao, Abe. 1995, 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> D'Costa, Gavin. 2005, 638.

<sup>45</sup> Hick, John. 1997, 162-4.

<sup>46</sup> Knitter, Paul, Perry Schmidt-Leukel, et al. *The Myth of Religious Superiority: Multi-Faith Exploration of Religious Pluralism*. New York: Orbis Books, 2005, 23.

<sup>47</sup> Hick, John. 2006, 190.

<sup>48</sup> All Biblical citations are from New Revised Standard Version.

<sup>49</sup> Hick, John. 2006, 153.

<sup>50</sup> Hick, John. "Is Christianity the Only True Religion, or One among Others?" Nortwich, England, 2001. <http://www.johnhick.org.uk/jsite/index.php/articles-by-johnhick/16-is-christianity-the-only-true-religion-or-one-among-others>.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

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